

Interpersonal Communication

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Interpersonal Communication

By Ryan Orcutt
Edited by Mary Mercer

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LESSON 1: The Communication Process

OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this lesson, staff members will be able to:

- List and explain the four areas of interpersonal skills that help people to communicate effectively with others
- List four techniques that help eliminate listening problems
- Describe passive listening and its role in interpersonal communication
- Describe active listening and its various techniques
- Provide a “do/don’t” list of proper listening

Introduction

Everyone communicates. Staff members communicate with friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and people receiving services on a daily basis. They communicate through words (verbal communication) and actions (nonverbal communication). This module is designed to provide you with the tools you need to appropriately express your thoughts and feelings and, more importantly, to listen to and understand the thoughts and feelings of others. These skills will be helpful when you interact with your coworkers, supervisors, people you support, and others.



Communication is vital to our personal and professional lives. We constantly need to convey our ideas, wants, and needs to others. Proper communication results in our ideas being accepted and our wants and needs satisfied. With this in mind, it is easy to see that effective communication skills are critical to every positive work environment. Improper communication, on the other hand, can result in misunderstandings, frustration of staff, and frustration of people receiving services.

How well a person communicates is affected by many factors. The staff member who demonstrates respect and trust will be more successful in communicating with coworkers and people receiving services. In order to communicate effectively, it is important to develop and maintain interpersonal skills in four areas:

- ATTENDING BEHAVIOR - skills that allow one to be comfortable and relaxed with others, maintain eye contact, and follow the comments of other people.
- ACTIVE LISTENING - skills that allow one to hear and accurately understand both the feelings and ideas others are expressing.
- EXPRESSING FEELINGS - skills that enable one to express emotions clearly and share them easily and positively with others.
- FEEDBACK - skills that allow one to give specific, descriptive, and nonjudgmental reactions to communication shared by others.



Using these four areas of interpersonal skills creates an easy, efficient communication atmosphere. Ideas can be freely shared without judgment. Both people are able to listen to one another respectfully and provide feedback in a helpful way. This does not come naturally to everyone. These interpersonal skills may take a great deal of practice and focus.

One of the most difficult communication skills to perfect is listening. We are often so concerned with sharing our own ideas that we forget to listen to the ideas of others. There is a very real difference between listening and simply waiting to talk.

An effective communicator not only listens, but works to eliminate distractions. Factors that may interfere with listening include: noise, uncomfortable seats, poor lighting, and extreme temperatures. If these distractions are avoided, the listener and speaker can focus on the message. The listener will convey sincere interest in what the speaker has to say.

In addition to avoiding distractions, the following techniques may help eliminate listening problems:

- **Be receptive** and try to prevent prejudice or anger from distorting what is heard. Be willing to listen to new ideas, pay attention, look for the speaker's intended meaning, and encourage the speaker by looking at him or her.
- **Concentrate** by trying to eliminate/ignore distractions.
- **Maintain a mental running summary** of the message.
- **Ask questions** to assist understanding unclear points.
- **Repeat or paraphrase** the speaker's ideas and invite him/her to explain unclear statements.



There are two basic styles of listening. Both types are considered to be proper and can be used simultaneously. The two styles of listening are “passive listening” and “active listening.”

Passive listening simply consists of brief statements which let the speaker know that the listener is following what is being said, such as “yes” or “oh.” Passive listening also includes eye contact with the speaker and slight head nods to show agreement with the speaker.

Active listening requires that the listener do more than simply nod and say brief statements. Active listening includes responding to what the speaker is saying in one or more of the following ways:

Personal statements - Personal statements tell the speaker that the listener is interested in what is being said and show interest in the speaker's idea or problem. This would include examples such as, “I completely agree with you,” or “I think you should wait a few minutes before addressing that problem.”

Paraphrasing - Another effective way to express a personal interest is by paraphrasing. The listener responds to the speaker in a way that indicates the listener understands what was said. Paraphrasing is different from repeating what has already been said word-for-word. Paraphrasing requires that the listener restate all or part of the speaker's statement in the listener's own words. The following is an example of this process.



A neighbor (speaker): "I've been watching Joe walk up and down my street. I'm very concerned that he won't watch out for traffic before going into the street. Joe is very friendly and he isn't bothering anyone, but he could get hurt."

Staff (listener): "Thank you for letting me know about this. It's clear to me that you are a thoughtful neighbor, and that you are genuinely concerned for Joe's safety. I appreciate you bringing this up. We all want Joe to be safe. I'll make sure everyone gets a reminder about this."

The listener in the above example not only used active listening, but he also paraphrased the neighbor's statements, and he also provided a possible solution to the problem. This possible solution is another aspect of active listening. It is called a supportive or reassuring response.

Supportive or reassuring response - In supportive or reassuring responses, the listener indicates to the speaker that he not only heard what was being said, but also supported the idea being proposed. In the above example, the staff showed support and reassurance by indicating that he would talk to the other staff about the neighbor's concern.

Ask for clarification - Often, a speaker does not give enough information to allow the listener to understand the opinion or problem being presented. The listener may need to request clarification. To simply allow the speaker to go on without clarifying what is being said would lead to a misunderstanding. In order for trust to exist in communication, it is very important that the listener avoid pretending to understand an unclear message. Questioning tells the speaker the listener isn't getting the message. A properly stated question should tell the speaker to provide more information. Questions allow the listener to obtain specific pieces of information such as who, what, where, when, and how. These types of questions (e.g., "Who said that?") ask for more information to clarify the speaker's comments or allow the listener to question further. Paraphrase the speaker's words until he/she agrees that the message was received correctly.

The following lists are strategies that will improve (Do) or hinder (Don't) listening:

DO

- Do focus on the message – It can be easy to be distracted by the speaker's appearance or clothing, speaking skills, or mannerisms. It is important to focus on what is being said, not how it is said.



- Do listen optimistically – Listen with the belief that the conversation is beneficial to the speaker and to the listener.
- Do ask questions – By the end of the conversation, it should be clear why the conversation happened. The points of view of both speaker and listener must be understood.
- Do keep an open mind and hold emotions in check – There are times when the listener hears something that is uncomfortable, or the listener may disagree with the speaker. Keeping an open mind will ensure that the listener will hear what is truly said.
- Do accept the speaker’s feelings – Whether or not the listener agrees with the message, the speaker is sharing feelings that are real to him/her.
- Do hold off conversations when certain barriers are present (stress, noisy environment, etc.) – Some distractions are unavoidable. It’s best to postpone the conversation until emotions are clear, and when the setting provides little or no distractions.



DON'T

- Don't jump ahead of what the speaker is saying - Most people think about four times as fast as the average person speaks. Therefore, the listener has a great deal of spare time to think about other things instead of listening. It is essential that the listener tune in to the speaker instead of focusing on a response.
- Don't interrupt – This shows the speaker that his/her opinion isn't as important as the listener's. Listen to the entire message before responding.
- Don't use “selective listening” – Certain words trigger the desire either to stop listening or to start listening. Hearing “pay raise” tends to cause a listener to listen more intently. On the other hand, hearing words like “budget” or “policies and procedures” causes some listeners to tune out the message. A good listener focuses on the whole message.
- Don't attempt to memorize everything that the speaker says – Listeners should focus intently, but try to understand the heart of the message without attempting to hold on to every detail.
- Don't try to write down everything that the speaker says – Writing down main points during a conversation is helpful, but trying to write down everything will cause the listener to fall behind the message. The listener may miss important information by writing down unnecessary details.
- Don't become distracted by the surroundings – Listeners must be careful not to shift focus to distracters. A cell phone, outside noise, uncomfortable seats, or objects in the room can all interfere with the message. Listening takes practice, but a good listener will maintain focus on the conversation.



LESSON 1: Feedback Exercise

1. List and explain the four areas of interpersonal skills that enable individuals to communicate effectively with others.

2. Compare and contrast passive and active listening styles.

3. List and describe three techniques of active listening.

4. List four tips for what to do and what not to do with proper listening:
 - Do -
 - Do -
 - Do -
 - Do -

 - Don't -
 - Don't -
 - Don't -
 - Don't -

LESSON 2: Interpersonal Interaction and Group Communication

OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, staff members will be able to:

- Explain a basic assumption of positive communication training
- Explain Passive Behavior
- Explain Aggressive Behavior
- Explain Assertive Behavior
- Describe how body language affects communication
- Describe techniques to use in group communication situations
- Describe how to maintain professionalism during electronic communication

Introduction

Appropriate positive communication skills are critical. These skills enable a person to relate more effectively to the people s/he comes in contact with on a daily basis, including family, friends, and coworkers. Staff members are judged not only for the way they meet the responsibilities of their positions, but also for the way they get along with others.

Many people experience unsatisfactory interpersonal relationships and frequently blame others for these failures. There are, however, many factors which interfere with an individual's ability to work and interact with others. Positive communication training is one approach designed to help people deal with the problems they create for themselves.

A basic assumption of positive communication training is that every individual is entitled to certain human rights. Among these rights are dignity, respect, and courtesy. The material in this unit is designed to provide staff members with positive communication skills and social skills that will enable them to:

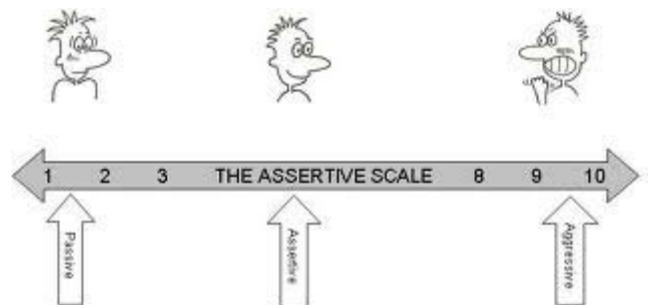
- communicate honestly and freely with their coworkers and others
- demonstrate respect for the feelings of others
- maintain respect for themselves

The following information will examine non-assertive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors and the effect they have on individuals and group/team relationships.

Three Levels of Interpersonal Interaction Styles:

1. Non-Assertive (Passive) Behavior

Acting non-assertively is an ineffective way of communicating. People who are generally non-assertive have difficulty expressing opinions, beliefs,



and feelings. They do not stand up for their rights and may feel as though they are being taken advantage of by others. Individuals who do not express their real thoughts and feelings tend to withhold valuable information from others. Failure to share these thoughts prevents change and hinders the growth of relationships. This is also known as “passive” behavior.

An example of passive behavior would be if a DSP fails to express concerns or fears when asked to do something s/he doesn’t want to do. S/he may go along with the request, but feel taken advantage of. This may give the DSP feelings of disrespect and inequality.

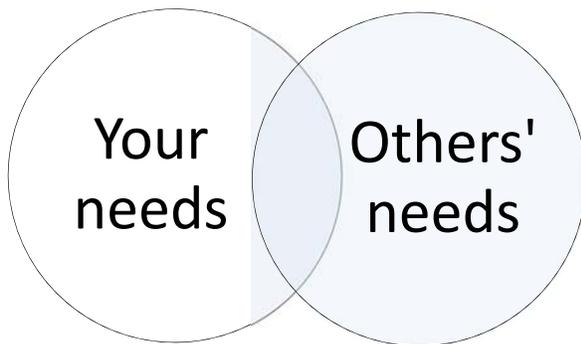
2. Aggressive Behavior

Acting aggressively is also an ineffective way of communicating. A person who responds aggressively violates the rights of others and may think the only way to get his or her point across is to yell, be sarcastic, or humiliate the other person. In an attempt to get what s/he wants, the aggressive person (the speaker) frequently offends others and may end up feeling confused, frustrated, and angry.



For example, Alice asks another DSP, Frank, to switch shifts with her next week, but Frank says he can’t. Alice then bullies Frank by saying, “I thought we were on a team. I always cover for you, but I won’t do that anymore.” In this situation, Alice is using aggressive behavior to force Frank to do something he’s unwilling to do. Many people confuse assertive and aggressive behavior. It is important to recognize the differences and to learn to be assertive rather than aggressive. Both assertion and aggression involve standing up for one’s rights. Aggressive interaction is displayed by demanding forms of communication. It ignores others’ wishes or ideas by threatening, humiliating, or dominating. Note: the aggressive person violates the rights of others, while the assertive person does not.

3. Positive/Assertive Behavior



Assertiveness is the interpersonal behavior in which a person speaks up for his or her interests without infringing on the rights of others. Its purpose is to promote honest two-way communication by directly expressing feelings and thoughts. It is not manipulating or forcing someone to meet your needs, and it may not necessarily get you what you want. In conflicts, assertiveness makes compromise possible.

As an example of assertive behavior, let’s consider coworkers Grant and Carrie. Grant has two paperwork assignments to complete and is seeking assistance from Carrie. When he sees

that Carrie isn’t stressed or overly busy, Grant approaches her and confidently asks if Carrie has time for a question. Grant says, “I know you have a busy schedule, but I’m having trouble finishing both of these paperwork duties today. Would you have time to help me by taking this

one for me?" Grant can't control what Carrie's response is, but he is showing honesty in seeking help and also respect for Carrie's own duties. Hopefully, Carrie will feel respected by Grant and possibly honored that he came to her for assistance.

Being assertive does not mean using the same style all the time. At times, the assertive individual may choose humor, intelligence, or collaboration to communicate. A person who has truly mastered assertive skills is able to choose how he or she will communicate. These people also allow themselves and others the freedom to make mistakes.

Nonverbal Communication

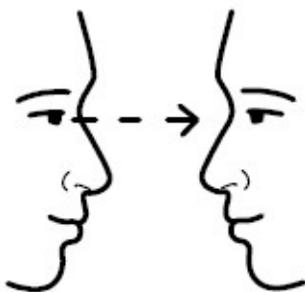
In addition to maintaining positive, assertive behavior, staff members must be aware of the messages they send through nonverbal communication. This includes body language, eye contact, facial expressions, and even tone of voice. Choosing the right words is important, but the messages sent nonverbally are just as important to remember.

Body Language

Body language is an important part of any interaction. There are several ways people communicate without using words at all.

Body Posture – Your body posture tells a great deal about your feelings. It is important to hold yourself in a way that looks natural to others and feels natural to you. The following suggestions may help you appear relaxed:

- Sit relaxed. Refrain from slouching or from sitting up too rigidly. It may also help to cross legs at the ankles or knees.
- Rest your hands in your lap. Your arms will probably be most relaxed if you rest your hands in your lap. Be careful not to fold your arms tightly across your chest, as that may give the impression that you are feeling angry or defensive.
- Stand at a comfortable distance. Face the person with whom you are talking. Be careful not to stand too close, as that can appear aggressive. The person may feel closed in. Don't stand too far away either. The person may feel you either don't care about the conversation, or that you are passive or afraid. Generally, a good distance is an arm's length, which is about two feet. However, it is important to alter this distance to show respect to personal and cultural differences.



Eye Contact – When you talk with people, you should try to hold their attention by looking directly into their eyes. When someone is talking with you, look at him or her. If you look off in another direction and/or roll your eyes, you nonverbally tell the person that you are not interested in what he or she is saying. If you look down at the ground, you seem passive and embarrassed and give the message that you are shy or feel uncomfortable about continuing the conversation.

Maintaining good eye contact is very important. However, be careful not to overuse it to the point of staring, since that tends to make people feel uncomfortable as well. Later in the module, you will also learn when to modify your level of eye contact to acknowledge cultural differences.

Body Movements –

- **Nodding your head occasionally** lets the person with whom you are speaking know you are listening and following the conversation. Shaking your head “no” can be an appropriate body movement. However, shaking your head in disbelief at what the other person is saying can be interpreted as aggressive.
- **Using hand gestures** can help emphasize key points in your conversation. However, be cautious about your use of hand gestures, as there are many - such as waving or pointing your index finger or pounding your fists - that clearly communicate aggressiveness.
- **Controlling body movements** is important, since some movements tend to interfere with your ability to communicate effectively with others. Avoid: tapping your feet, clicking a pen, biting your nails, shaking your knees, playing with your beard or mustache, twirling your hair, or playing with rings or necklaces. Also, try to keep from shifting too much in your seat, since these behaviors send the message that you are nervous or uncomfortable.



Facial Expressions – People appear aggressive when they clench their teeth, jut out their lower jaw, or purse their lips. They appear to be passive when they bite their lower lip or if they smile, laugh, or wink when saying something serious. A pleasant expression helps people feel relaxed. People who smile and laugh appropriately during a conversation are considered socially effective.

Tone and Volume of Voice – Voice quality should be calm and even. The speech rate should be slow enough for others to follow the speaker’s thoughts. A fast talker is often seen as aggressive. A person who speaks too slowly is viewed as passive. A whining tone may be viewed as childish or aggressive. Sarcasm is often interpreted as aggressive behavior.

The volume of the voice should be controlled as well. Speaking too loudly seems pushy; mumbling or speaking too softly seems passive. Speak in a firm voice, loud enough so others can hear, but not so loud as to seem to be yelling. A speaker with these skills is assertive and will be more effective in interactions.

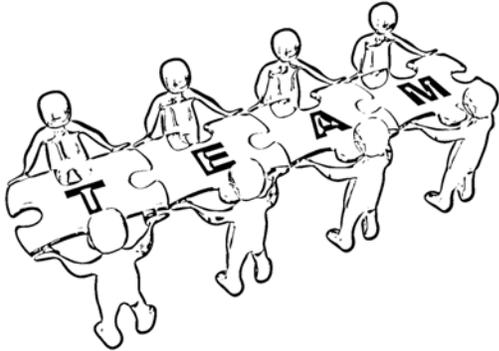
One-Way and Two-Way Communication



Often people communicate in a manner described as one-way communication. Like a one-way street, one-way communication only goes in one direction. There is a time and place for one-way communication, such as a presentation, where listeners are receiving information but are not conversing with the speaker. An example of inappropriate one-way communication would be when a

supervisor presents ideas and is unwilling or unable to accept the staff member's response to the ideas. Two-way communication is often considered the best form of communication. Two-way communication not only allows the supervisor to present ideas but also allows DSPs to respond to those ideas. The eventual outcome of good two-way communication will be a cooperative solution to the speaker's ideas or problems.

Group Communication



Often, staff members need to communicate with their coworkers, people receiving services, and families in a group setting. This may be in response to specific problems or for general information purposes. The basic communication skills described previously in this lesson all apply when communicating with one other person and with a group. However, in a group setting, the speaker needs to pay attention to additional aspects of his/her thoughts.

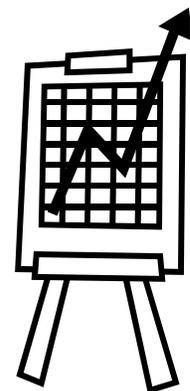
It is important for the speaker to **make his/her statements as specific as possible and as complete as possible**. Statements that leave out information or assume that the listeners “already know this” tend to result in poor communication. For example, a DSP discussing an individual’s “aggressive” behavior may lead the other team members into many interpretations of this situation. These interpretations directly affect what interventions the group may decide to implement. Misinterpretations caused by a lack of specific information will only add to the problem. Instead of using a general term, state exactly what you see (e.g., hits, throws, yells).

Another key aspect of communicating within a group is to **repeat what has been said**. The staff member who repeats key statements either by paraphrasing or by using the same wording increases the chance of having his/her idea or problem clearly understood. Repetition can also be accomplished by other means, such as graphs (e.g., to show how well an individual has been doing in acquiring a work skill), pictures, signs, and other charts.

A final way in which a staff member can increase the chances of his/her ideas being successfully understood by the group is to **ask for feedback**. Feedback can be in the form of comments related to his/her statements (e.g., “What ideas do you have to assist Evelyn to improve her social skills?”).

Feedback should be immediate, meaning that it must occur within the context of the group meeting. Feedback should be specific and relate directly to the task at hand – never to the personalities of those involved in the group. Feedback will provide the speaker with information as to how well the group is relating to and understanding the discussion.

Although group settings feel like a more open setting for communication, everyone involved must follow agency confidentiality procedures and regulations such as HIPAA. For instance, at a



team meeting for a person supported, no other people supported should be discussed, and coworkers' names should not be included.

Electronic Communication

Communication often happens face-to-face, but cell phones and email are also frequently used to communicate with one another. Electronic communication has revolutionized the way we stay connected to our family, friends, and coworkers. DSPs must remember that using cell phones and email for work purposes requires professionalism. Agencies may vary in their policies for DSP cell phone and email use. Here are some guidelines for proper etiquette while working:

Cell Phones

- Keep your phone out of site (such as in your purse or pocket) when you are with other people. Looking at your phone during face-to-face conversations is rude and may appear as if you are not listening. This applies during meetings and providing direct support.
- Set ringers to silent. This prevents unnecessary interruptions and helps you maintain focus on duties.
- Avoid personal calls. If you must make a personal call, do so on your break.
- If texting is permitted for work purposes, avoid using “text language.” Treat a text message as any other form of business communication. Using abbreviations such as “LOL” or “2nite” lacks professionalism and should be avoided.
- Before sending a work text, read over your message. This will avoid sending autocorrected words that change the message.
- Ensure your ringtone is appropriate for work. If the volume isn't down, it may be embarrassing and unprofessional to have your phone start ringing with an inappropriate song/message.
- Ensure your voicemail greeting and ringback are appropriate. Many agencies have contact lists of employee phone numbers. This means your personal number may be used for work purposes. Greetings should include your name and a brief request to leave a message. Inappropriate songs should not be chosen as ringback tones.
- Never access social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) from your phone during work hours.

Email

- Read each incoming email completely before responding. Many people read an email partway and quickly respond with questions. Take the time to read the entire email and you may find the answers to questions are often in the email itself.
- Never write an email while angry. Wait until you are calm; this will prevent you from typing something you may not mean.



- Never send an email in all capital letters. Email messages in capital letters are interpreted as yelling at the recipient(s).
- Read your own emails before sending. Ask yourself, “Does this email reflect the tone I want?” and “Could someone misinterpret what I am saying?”
- Use spell check. Ensure there are no misspelled words or improper grammar. This also allows you to catch any words the email program may have autocorrected.
- Check the recipient list before sending. Ensure that the only people receiving this email are the intended people. This may help avoid HIPAA violations.
- Use a secure communication method when communicating about person’s served and follow the same confidentiality procedures that must be used in face-to-face communication.

LESSON 2: Feedback Exercise

1. Positive communication training believes that every individual is entitled to certain human rights including _____, _____, and _____ when others are communicating with them.
2. People who are _____ do not stand up for their rights, and may feel they are being taken advantage of.
3. A person who communicates _____ violates the rights of others and may think the only to get their point across is to _____, _____, and _____.
4. _____ is the interpersonal behavior in which a person speaks up for his/her rights without infringing on _____.
5. In conflicts, _____ makes compromise possible.
6. a. Compare and contrast one-way vs. two-way communication.

b. Which is usually seen as most effective and why?
7. Describe the different aspects of body language.
8. List three techniques that can be used in group communication situations to ensure that the staff members' ideas will be successfully understood.
9. Describe three aspects of proper cell phone etiquette.
10. Describe three aspects of proper email etiquette.

LESSON 3: Strategies for Clear Communication among Supervisors, Professionals, and Coworkers

OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this lesson, staff members will be able to:

- **List five guidelines for improving the supervisor-employee relationship through effective communication**
- **Ask for help assertively**
- **Refuse requests assertively**
- **Give constructive criticism**
- **Accept criticism**

Introduction

There are a number of elements that must be present in any situation to ensure clear communication. Some are commonplace and things we take for granted. Others are more difficult to identify and require effort to understand and use when communicating. If the members of the team are not careful or do not utilize these skills, positive communication will not happen. Keep the following suggestions in mind:

- Know, respect, and understand the attitudes and feelings of both supervisors and DSPs. Both parties need to deal openly and professionally with attitudes and feelings toward their roles and duties. When feelings are not shared and openly communicated, the relationship will not grow and the team will be less effective.
- Recognize and understand the similarities and differences between the people involved in the team. They may include different points of view about cultural and religious heritages, level of education and experience, and other differences that can affect the working relationship.
- Be willing to ask for clarification or assistance if the assignment is not understood.
- Work to create a climate of cooperation, trust, respect, and loyalty by meeting regularly to discuss procedures and problems. Regular meetings will help to establish and maintain open channels of communication.
- Actively seek to develop and share a common vocabulary.
- Supervisors should identify special interests, talents, and training the DSPs have. Use that information to enhance coworker's skills and improve the supports.
- Supervisors must ensure that directions and expectations are clearly understood and that DSPs have the information and skills they need to do their job.



What Staff Members Need to Know about Supervisors

SUPERVISION STYLES: Supervisors, like everyone else, have unique characteristics and ways of doing things. These characteristics are rarely given much thought by the supervisor because they are the core of his/her management style. However, DSPs need to know as much about their supervisors as possible. Without awareness and understanding of how the supervisor prefers to manage, the effectiveness of the team can be undermined.

Some supervisors are very structured and provide specific directions based on rules and procedures. In some cases, the supervisor will want to provide direction in every detail of DSPs' jobs. Some refer to this style as "micromanagement." Another supervisor may ask DSPs to share ideas and information and participate in the decision making process. Still a third supervisor may tend to be nondirective and prefer the DSPs learn by observing what the supervisor does and then model that behavior.

Supervision styles also include the different ways supervisors provide constructive criticism or "coaching." An effective supervisor will provide coaching in an assertive manner. This would mean the supervisor communicates the issue clearly and positively, focusing on the target issue and not the DSP as a person. Being assertive during constructive criticism also includes recommending a solution to the target issue.



It is essential that staff members tell their supervisor their preferred style of communication. For example, some employees don't frequently use text or email as a main form of communication while others do. For staff recognition, some employees don't appreciate being praised in front of their coworkers at a staff meeting, while other employees enjoy public recognition. Supervisors can more effectively communicate direction and appreciation to staff members if they know the style of communication that best fits each person. Both supervisors and DSPs need to know the preferences of the other and make adjustments to experience the most positive and effective relationship.

Sussman and Deep (1989) suggest the following effective communication guidelines to improve the supervisor-DSP relationship:

- Understand the supervisor's job. Try to understand the pressures, limits, and goals of your supervisor. Once you learn the most difficult parts of your supervisor's responsibilities, you can offer help where it is most needed.
- Keep the supervisor informed on topics that he/she should know about and on the progress of your work. Most managers hate to hear information from others that they should have heard from you.
- Adjust your communication style to your supervisor's style. Consider the best time of day to get your message through, as well as the manner (written or verbal message).
- Find out the supervisor's expectations. Ask questions, observe behavior, and use common sense to help define your responsibilities and standards of job performance.

- Represent your supervisor positively and accurately to others. Misrepresentations often damage working relationships and morale. In addition, these distortions all-too-frequently have a way of getting back to the supervisor.
- Be reliable. This includes being on time for your shift, meetings, and assignment deadlines.
- Be realistic about your abilities, time, and resources to get a job done. Accept duties willingly when you are able.
- Accept responsibility and be accountable. Don't blame others when there are problems. Work to find solutions to difficult situations.

What Supervisors Need to Know about the People They Supervise



Supervisors have the responsibility of knowing the employees they supervise in many ways. Supervisors must know the strengths of their team as well as areas where each person needs to grow. Just like supervisors, each worker has their own communication style. As a supervisor, it is valuable to find out the most effective way to communicate with each staff member. This includes knowing how different staff members prefer to be recognized, coached, and contacted (phone, email, etc.). This may change from person to person. When supervisors communicate in the style the staff member prefers, it lets that staff member know they are respected and valued as a unique employee.

Making Requests

Letting others know you need assistance can be difficult. Whether you are seeking the answer to a simple question about your job, requesting some help carrying heavy objects, borrowing something, or are looking for someone to cover for you when you have to take time away from the job, making requests can feel awkward.

There are several thoughts people may have that prevent them from asking for help. Some examples are:

- *If I ask him to help me out, I'm really imposing on him.*

Very often people feel flattered to be asked. They may actually feel pleased that you feel comfortable enough with them to ask for help, and they may be ready to go out of their way to be of service. You are only imposing if the other person feels he has no choice in the matter or if saying "yes" would be a major inconvenience. Before you ask, decide if you think it would be an inconvenience if you were asked to do what you are requesting.

- *If I ask for help, she will think I'm really stupid.*

You will be respected more if you do ask for help than if you don't when help is really needed. Particularly on a new job or with new responsibilities, your supervisor will expect you to ask for help.

- *If I ask for help, she'll feel so sorry for me that she'll agree to do what I ask even if she doesn't want to.*

If you make a sincere request for help, the person has no reason to feel sorry for you. He/she may be sympathetic to the fact that you are having a hard time, but that does not mean pity. Try not to worry about the person being passive and doing things she/he does not want to do. Everyone on the job has responsibilities that they enjoy, and likewise, tasks that are a bit more of a chore to do. Assume the person will be assertive and will refuse your request if it is unreasonable.

Here are several suggestions to aid in asking for help:

- Decide if help is really needed. Is this something you could or should do yourself?
- Select the best person to ask for help. Pick someone who has the time and is likely to say "yes."
- Be sure to greet the person first. Then, explain the problem, and be clear in your explanation of exactly what you are asking and why. Many requests are turned down because the person being asked does not fully understand what is expected.
- You will get better results if you say "please" when making your request.
- Be prepared for the person to say "no." There are many times your request will be refused, and it is important to remember that, although it is your personal right to ask, it is his or her right to turn you down. All you can do is make your request and indicate why you need help.
- If the request is refused, respond with a gracious reply such as, "Oh, okay, maybe someone else can help me" or "Don't worry, I understand." Notice that neither of these responses pressured the other person, trying to change his or her mind. If the answer is "no," continuing to ask may seem pushy, which is aggressive.
- Express your gratitude when someone helps you. If help is offered but the person is busy at the moment, ask, "When would be a good time?"



Refusing Requests

Working in the human service field can be very demanding. Supervisors and coworkers must make many requests of DSPs. In order to meet the needs of the people receiving services, there needs to be a spirit of cooperation and flexibility.

However, there may be times, due to personal commitments, time constraints, or for ethical reasons, DSPs may have to refuse requests made by others. Many people have a very hard time

saying “no.” Many times in life, people may agree to buy things, do favors, and take on extra responsibilities even though they didn’t want to. Later they become upset with themselves for being so passive.

Being able to refuse requests allows you, rather than someone else, to run your life. You make your own decisions, take action, and respect yourself more for your assertiveness. Being able to follow through and say “no” when you mean “no” will help you stay out of situations in which you might feel someone is taking advantage of you and keep you from doing something you might regret later. There are several guidelines that will help you refuse requests:

- Be sure you completely understand the request before you make your decision.
- If necessary, postpone your decision until you can properly think it through.
- Carefully consider if there are any serious risks to saying “no” before you assert yourself.
- Ask yourself, “Is this request part of my job responsibilities and within the scope of the duties I am paid to perform?”
- When you turn down a request, be sure to actually use the word “no.” The word “no” is a clear answer and has more power. It is less likely to be taken as “maybe.” If you try to turn down a request by saying, “I don’t think I should,” the person asking you may think you are still considering saying “yes.”
- Use assertive body language, such as shaking your head “no.”
- Acknowledge the person’s disappointment.
- Give a **brief** reason for your answer.
- It may be necessary to say “no” several times during the conversation before the person gets the message.
- If the person persists even after you have repeated “no” several times, it may help to change the topic of conversation.
- Perhaps you don’t want to agree with the person’s original request, but you would still like to help him or her out. If that is the case, you might want to offer a compromise.
- Keep in mind that it is OK to change your mind.



Giving Constructive Criticism

One of the most important skills we can learn is how to give constructive criticism or feedback to coworkers without being hurtful and without starting needless arguments. We are all exposed to people who do bothersome things, but most of us find ourselves feeling very uncomfortable when it comes to speaking up and expressing our irritation.

One common reaction is to passively put up with the behavior. Another common reaction is to let the irritation build up until it finally pops out in an angry outburst. Neither of these

approaches will foster the spirit of teamwork essential to a productive and enjoyable workplace. Some suggestions for giving criticism assertively without offending others include:

- Speak to the person in private. Criticizing a staff member in front of friends or coworkers is humiliating. Wait for a good time and pick a private place to express your negative feelings.
- Direct your comments at the behavior, not at the person. Be as specific as you can about what is bothering you. Providing criticism that is vague or hurtful will not be as effective. An example of ineffective criticism would be, “You are a lazy worker and you are late all of the time.” The person hearing this doesn’t know why he is being labeled as “lazy.” It’s much more effective to focus on the behavior. For example, “I’ve noticed that you’ve been over ten minutes late for work three times this week. What is causing you to be late?” In this example, the constructive criticism is targeting the action of being late, but it doesn’t label the person or attack his character.
- Deal with issues as they come up. Do not let negative feelings pile up to the point where you blow up. Limit the number of negative remarks you make at any one time. Whenever possible, start and finish conversations on a positive note.
- Be sure that your body language matches what you are saying. Remember to maintain good eye contact, a calm but serious facial expression, and a confident voice.



Use the “Sandwich Technique.” Start with a positive statement, be specific about what is bothering you, and make positive suggestions about how the person can change the problem behavior.

Receiving Criticism

Receiving criticism gracefully is a major challenge. Most people feel very uncomfortable hearing that others disapprove of their behavior. They often react by becoming either anxious or angry. Many arguments begin as a result of criticism that is poorly given and poorly received. There are several important tips that can help you accept criticism professionally, even when it does not seem like a fair complaint:

- Avoid becoming defensive. Don’t attack back with criticism of your own. Techniques to help you keep control include: taking a few deep breaths, counting to ten in your head, and silently using coping statements such as, “I can handle this.” Once you are calm, slowly respond in an assertive manner.
- Ask what it is that is specifically bothering the person criticizing you. By asking, you encourage him or her to be direct and clear about what is seen as the problem.
- Acknowledge the person’s feelings in a way that lets him or her know that you are really paying attention. This will help reduce the tension. It is hard for people to stay angry when you respond in a calm and understanding way.

- Sometimes it helps if you can paraphrase the criticism. Saying it again in your own words shows the person that you have really understood what was said.
- Once you've heard the criticism, take a few seconds to decide if you think it is a fair complaint or not. If the criticism is fair and the person has a good point, you may ask for specific suggestions on how you could improve in that area.
- If you disagree with the criticism, calmly let the person know why. Starting with, "I think there has been a misunderstanding" may help and sounds a lot less defensive than something like, "You've got it all wrong."
- It may be helpful to calmly share some of your feelings about the criticism.
- If appropriate, it may be possible to propose a compromise. This shows that you hear and understand the criticism and are ready to respond to it.
- Finally, if the criticism is on target, do say you are sorry. This shows the person that you acknowledged his/her complaint, and that you are open to growth in your performance.



LESSON 3: Feedback Exercise

1. List four guidelines for improving the supervisor-employee relationship through effective communication.
2. Describe four guidelines to keep in mind when making requests for help.
3. List four considerations for staff before refusing a request.
4. Describe how to give criticism assertively without offending others.
5. Explain how the “Sandwich Technique” is used in giving criticism.
6. List four tips that will help a person receive criticism.

LESSON 4: Problem Solving and Resolving Conflict

OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, staff members will be able to:

- List and explain seven steps that supervisors and staff members can use to help improve their ability to work together and with others
- Explain how the use of jargon can impede the development of a strong team effort
- Describe “The Golden Rule”
- Summarize effective communication skills staff members plan to use at work

Introduction

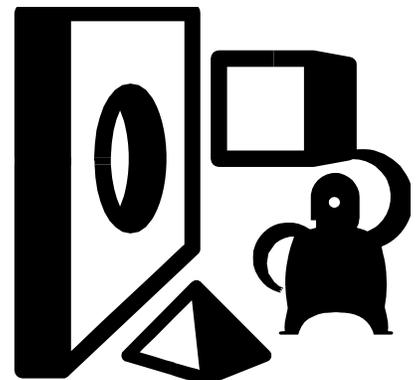
Not all problems are the result of conflict between people. Sometimes things are just not going well and could be improved – if you could figure out what to do differently. Conflict will always be present, no matter how much you or others try to avoid it, but conflict is not always bad. It can arise because people feel that what they are doing is important, or when someone is being creative and thinking in a way that others don’t follow.

If addressed properly, conflict can be an opportunity to hear about ways to improve and grow professionally. In every conflict, staff members should always practice “The Golden Rule.” This term defines the concept of treating other people the way you would want to be treated. Everyone rightly feels that they deserve to be treated with dignity, respect, and courtesy. “The Golden Rule” is applied when people treat others with dignity and respect because this is how they would want to be treated by others.

The following is a series of steps that can be used by supervisors and staff members to improve their ability to work together and with people with disabilities, parents/guardians, and others. While this approach to problem solving is based on everyone working together to reach agreement, there are times when it will be necessary for administrators and other supervisors to make decisions that DSPs may not always fully appreciate. However, by maintaining open lines of communication and mutual trust, these problems can be minimized.

1. Identifying and Describing the Problem

IDENTIFY the conflict or problem clearly. A situation must be clearly understood. If concerns and issues cannot be stated clearly, it is impossible to find a satisfactory solution. Everyone involved should describe the problem in their own words and from their own point of view. This may be done by asking and answering these questions: What is the problem? Who is involved? Who is affected? How are they affected?



2. Defining and Determining the Causes of the Problem

DETERMINE what has created the problem and causes it to persist. For example, the problem may be caused by outside conditions (legal restrictions, limited money, etc.) that DSPs may be unable to change, or it may be due to a lack of understanding between the roles and duties of supervisors and DSPs. Often the conflict is merely a difference in how people interpret the situation. Factors that may influence how a problem is defined may include differences in values and attitudes, age, work experience and education, cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and other personal traits. It is important that the real problem be separated from surface events, and that areas of agreement and disagreement be identified.



3. Deciding on a Goal and Identifying Alternative Solutions

Once the problem has been identified and the causes of the problem have been determined, then both parties are ready to **DECIDE** on a goal and develop options for solutions. The primary question that needs to be asked is, “What do we want to achieve and how can we go about achieving it?” By working together and brainstorming a list of solutions, a plan can be chosen that satisfies all parties. It will also enable them to determine what additional information, resources, skills, or knowledge they will need to carry out the solution.

4. Communicating

Admit there is a problem. Let the other person involved know what it is and that you are concerned about it. Talking around it is not the way to resolve it. Be open, straight forward, and clear. **COMMUNICATE** with the other person(s) involved in a way that doesn't make the conflict worse by creating anger or hurt feelings.

5. Negotiating a Solution

Once a problem has been identified, you are ready to **NEGOTIATE** a solution. Conflict resolution should not be a win/lose activity. When it works best, it is a win/win activity that takes both points of view into account. Both sides must think the solution is fair.



6. Selecting and Implementing a Course of Action

IMPLEMENT the negotiated solution. This is the most difficult part to accomplish. Up to now, neither party has taken any action. Only words have been exchanged. To make a decision about which course of action to take, the participants should decide which solution is most likely to get the desired results. Agreeing on a solution is not enough. The agreement must be carried out as planned, or someone will be upset and the conflict cycle will start over again. The participants must try it out and test it to see if it will work. Provide enough time to implement and evaluate the solution.

Behaviors and new skills cannot change overnight. Continue communicating during this stage to make sure understanding and cooperation guide the process. When implementing the solution, the participants will feel they were part of the solution and will work better together in the future.

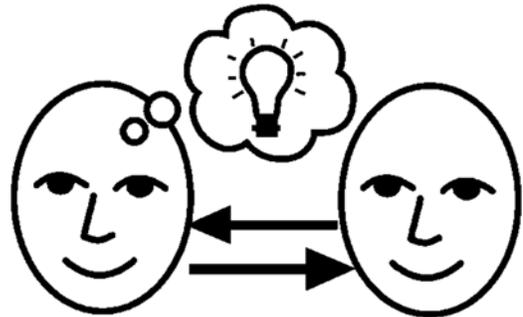
7. Evaluating the Results

After a trial period, when the solution has been implemented, the people involved should reconvene and discuss progress in order to **EVALUATE** the results. Has the problem been resolved? Is there progress? If not - why not? Should another alternative be attempted? Should the team ask for assistance from other sources? All of these are questions that will need to be addressed in order to assess the effectiveness of the process.

Expressing Feelings and Providing Feedback

Problems in agencies may be personal or procedural. They may be related to the performance of either people receiving services or workers, or involve partnerships with parents/guardians, employers and the general public.

Many times, because of the pressures of other duties, teams may ignore or postpone dealing with a problem that involves disagreements or conflicts with coworkers. Ignoring problems doesn't solve them and may actually make things worse over time. It is necessary for the people involved to make a decision. Finding mutually acceptable solutions is not always easy. The responsibility for developing effective solutions is likely to be left to the supervisors and DSPs with little outside assistance or support.



Interpersonal skills enable people to share emotions and ideas honestly with others and to have respect for the feelings, values, and cultural heritage of others. These skills also allow individuals to relate effectively. They are able to give descriptive, nonjudgmental, specific reactions to families, co-workers, people receiving services, and others.

Improving the Person-Centered Team

The assumption is all too often made that one agency is pretty much like any other agency. In fact, nothing is further from the truth. Agencies reflect the attitudes and styles of the staff, the people served, community values, and other cultural factors. Therefore, it is important that an agency provide an overview and orientation about the philosophy of the agency, personnel practices, and procedures that all employees are expected to follow, whether they spend most of their time in residential settings, employment settings, or another environment.

It is difficult to make progress when teams don't have a common understanding. Professionals tend to use the same jargon in connection with assessment techniques, program planning, and methods. This jargon can become a form of shorthand that allows professionals to communicate

comfortably with each other. Unfortunately this can exclude others from participating in the decision process (e.g., parents, people served, or DSPs).

This form of “shorthand” communication is beneficial when everyone involved is familiar with the terms. However, it would be very frustrating for someone whom was unfamiliar with the terms. It is vital to transform jargon and unfamiliar ideas into common language for others on the team. This is especially true in a group setting. When members speak in a way that only a few in the group understand, communication is ineffective and potentially frustrating.

LESSON 4: Feedback Exercise

1. In communicating with others, _____ will always be present, but it should not always be considered negative.
2. It is not enough to identify the problem. It is essential to determine what _____ the problem and what causes it to _____.
3. When conflict resolution works best, it is a _____ - _____ activity that takes both points of view into account.
4. List and explain the seven steps used by supervisors and staff members to improve their ability to work together and with others.

5. Describe how the use of jargon can hinder the development of a strong team effort.

LESSON 5: Special Considerations

OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, staff members will be able to:

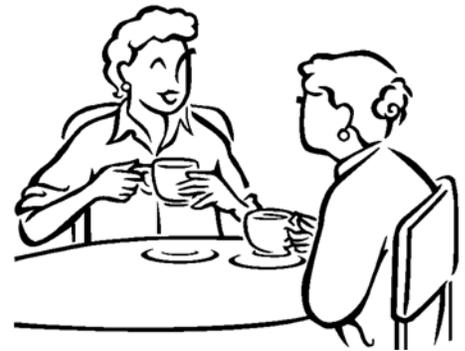
- Define ways to build relationships with people receiving services
- Identify ways to improve communication with people receiving services
- Describe strategies to respect generational and cultural differences

Introduction

The very first statement of this module is worth repeating: Everyone communicates. Each of the interpersonal skills taught in the previous chapters can apply to coworkers and to people receiving services. In addition to these universally useful skills, there are some additional considerations staff must keep in mind during unique circumstances. Staff may have to overcome language barriers, generational differences, and other communication barriers of the people they support and their coworkers.

Building Relationships with People Receiving Services

Staff members play important roles in the lives of the people they support. There are many ways to provide opportunities to practice effective communication, social skills, and problem-solving skills. Staff members are responsible to support self-determination and help people learn how to stand up for their own rights. People with disabilities may also need assistance to develop and maintain friendships. Here are a few guidelines DSPs should follow:



- Respect the human rights and individuality of every person.
- Reach out to learn likes, dislikes, and communication styles.
- Use positive communication. Listen carefully, maintain eye contact, ask questions, and respond to their ideas, concerns, and needs.
- Be a good role model. Treat people receiving services the way you want them to treat others. Be fair, kind, and polite. Never shout or use abusive language.
- Use humor, but do not use sarcasm or make fun of others. Remember that people receiving services pick up on the communication styles of staff.
- Encourage independence and individuality by providing opportunities for people to make choices.
- Reinforce the use of appropriate social skills. Model and teach methods the person can use to strengthen their ability to monitor and control their actions, share emotions/feelings, and make and maintain friendships.

Communication occurs in a variety of ways. People, with and without disabilities, may communicate with words, sign language, gestures, facial expressions, actions, and technology (phones, email, social media, adaptive devices, etc.). Staff members should respond to each of these methods of communication equally.

For example, if a DSP walks into the living room and says, “Is anyone hungry?” One person may say, “No, I’m not hungry.” Another person may use sign language to gesture, “No.” Another person may shake his head and look away. Another person may make a disgusted face. Yet another person may stand up and walk out of the room. Each person used a different style of communication, but each message was the same.

It is essential that DSPs understand the unique communication style of each person they support. Keep in mind that one person may use multiple forms of communication at any given time. DSPs with effective communication skills will alter their approach if communication isn’t working.

Ways Staff Members Can Improve Communication with People Receiving Services

- Acknowledge each person’s attempt at communication – verbal and nonverbal – with responses which show interest and understanding.
- Use language and sentence length appropriate to each person’s level of understanding.
- Encourage the person to take the lead in communicative interactions.
- Allow people to express negative feelings.
- Accept periods of silence. Each person takes a different amount of time to process what others are saying before preparing a response.
- Refrain from offering reassurance too quickly, changing the conversation topic, or defending staff or others the person criticizes.
- Use helpful messages rather than comments that block communication.

Generational and Cultural Differences

Staff members must understand that their coworkers also have differences that affect interpersonal communication. Generational and cultural differences are often overlooked and have the potential to create tension. Both communication partners should be aware of these differences and how to overcome them.

For example, one DSP may have grown up without the use of cell phones or access to the internet and, therefore, may not be as comfortable with texting or emailing as a form of communication. Another DSP may have had a cell phone for a majority of his/her life and sees a phone as the primary form of communication. Neither of these perspectives is wrong, but each is different, and they do require mutual understanding. It is



acceptable to have different communication styles. However, staff members must be aware of what is considered to be appropriate and what is inappropriate.

Here are a few suggestions and examples of how to demonstrate your respect for generational and cultural differences. Some of the following suggestions are adapted from *The Power of Diversity: Supporting the Immigrant Workforce* (Sedlezky, Anderson, Hewitt, Onell, Sauer, et.al, 2001):

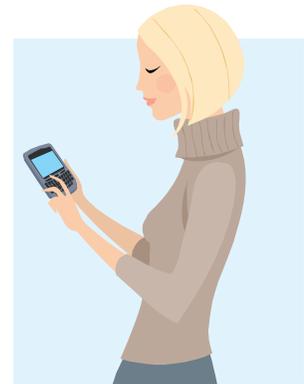


Find common ground with coworkers in terms of communication. Get to know certain words and phrases that are common to each person’s vocabulary as well as phrases/words that can create misunderstandings. Figures of speech and jokes may be difficult for people of other cultures to understand or have no meaning at all for them (e.g., “The whole nine yards” or “Her head ‘hit’ the pillow”).

Consider the person’s experience/exposure to technology, shopping, performing household tasks, or personal cares. Workers from other cultures may have had differing levels of exposure to email, voicemail, computers, appliances, automobiles, specialized equipment, and everyday activities at home and in the community. For example, the grocery store might be overwhelming to some new immigrants. They may have different ideas about how to prepare or store food. Something as basic as removing a frozen pizza from the box before heating it may have to be explained. “Typical” cleaning supplies may not be “typical” at all to DSPs from other cultures.

Allow additional processing time. Some English language learners may need more time to understand and respond to communication. They might not be aware that they have missed critical pieces of information. The English language learner may respond to others as if they are agreeing to something, when really they are just acknowledging that they are listening. Or, they may not respond at all as they try to fully understand the meaning of what they are being told. This processing time could take several minutes or longer.

Utilize appropriate body language and eye contact. This will vary from person to person. For example, in many cultures, direct eye contact is seen as rude. In other cultures, not giving eye contact is disrespectful or unprofessional. For most people over the age of 25, looking at your phone when someone is talking with you shows disrespect and a lack of interest in what the other person is saying.



Respect body distance and touch. People from different cultures are used to speaking to one another at various distances. Some cultures use a lot of physical touch during communication while members of other cultures would find standing close enough to touch the other to be very offensive, perhaps even immoral. Find a good balance where both parties feel comfortable.

Be aware of gender roles from different cultures. In some cultures, women are not seen as authority figures. Having a female supervisor may be a difficult transition for a male staff

member from these cultures. Assisting with personal cares for a member of the opposite gender may also be difficult for some staff because of their cultural or religious beliefs. Sometimes, these differences can be accommodated, but if they are essential functions of the job, the supervisor will need to work with the individual to determine if this position is a good fit for him/her.

Be aware of cultural viewpoints. Some cultures may view getting right to the point without “small talk” as rude. Some cultures may be extremely hierarchical. The chain of command and respect given to certain positions is much more important than in the US. DSPs from those countries may seek out/accept direction and information only from the supervisor.

In some countries, time is always there – it can’t be wasted or spent. In these cultures, there isn’t a focus on being on time and not wasting time as we find more dominant in the US culture.

Ask questions about differences. Never assume you know what the other person is thinking or feeling. Asking questions invites honesty and mutual understanding.

Note: If someone expresses discomfort with certain communication, do your best to honor those feelings.

Not understanding cultural and generational differences in communication “rules” and styles can lead to misunderstandings between team members. Language, cultural references, cultural viewpoints, and nonverbal behavior all play an important role in how we communicate with others. Working together to identify all the ways communication can break down, as well as strategies to work together effectively, are the keys to success.

LESSON 5: Feedback Exercise

1. List four ways to build positive relationships with people receiving services.
2. Identify four guidelines to improve communication with people receiving services.
3. Describe three ways to communicate effectively while respecting generational and cultural differences.

Feedback Exercise Answer Key

Lesson 1

1.
 - a) Attending Behavior - the interpersonal skills that allow one to be comfortable and relaxed with others, to maintain eye contact and follow the comments of other people.
 - b) Active Listening - the interpersonal skills that allow one to hear and accurately understand both the feelings and ideas others are expressing without interpreting what the individual hears based on personal bias or mood.
 - c) Expressing Feelings - the interpersonal skills that enable one to express emotions clearly and share them easily and positively with others.
 - d) Feedback - the interpersonal skills that allow one to give descriptive, non-judgmental and specific reactions to others.

2. Passive listening consists of brief verbal statements (e.g., “yes” or “oh” which let the speaker know that the individual is listening. Passive listening also includes eye contact with the speaker and simple movements of the listener’s head to show agreement.

Active listening requires that the listener do more than nod in response to the speaker’s comments. Active listening requires that the person listen to the speaker and respond in one or more of the following ways: adding personal statements, paraphrasing, using supportive or reassuring response, and asking for clarification.

3. **The addition of personal statements** (e.g. “I completely agree with you.”) to the speaker’s responses.

Paraphrasing (restating the speaker’s message in the listener’s own words) also shows a speaker that you are actively listening. It requires the listener to respond to the speaker in such a way that it indicates the listener understands what was said.

Supportive or reassuring response is a part of active listening that involves using statements that validate the feelings of the speaker (“I can tell you are concerned about him.”)

Ask for clarification while active listening involves asking questions for any unclear or confusing statements. It lets the speaker know the listener is interested in understanding the speaker accurately.

4.

DO

 - Do focus on the message
 - Do listen optimistically

- Do ask questions
- Do keep an open mind and hold emotions in check
- Do accept the speaker's feelings
- Do hold off conversations when certain barriers are present (stress, noisy environment, etc.)

DON'T

- Don't jump ahead of what the speaker is saying
- Don't interrupt
- Don't use "selective listening"
- Don't attempt to memorize everything that the speaker says
- Don't try to write down everything that the speaker
- Don't become distracted by the environment

Lesson 2

1. Dignity, respect, and courtesy (in any order)
2. Non-assertive or passive
3. Aggressively; yell, be sarcastic, or humiliate the other person
4. Assertive communication; the rights of others.
5. Assertiveness
6. a) One-way communication is communicating in a style that only looks at the speaker's point of view and refuses to accept the other person's ideas.

Two-way communication allows both viewpoints to be considered in solving problems and communicating.

b) Two-way communication is seen as most effective because it actively involves all persons in the environment.

7. a) Body posture: It is important to hold your body in a way that appears relaxed and natural.
 - b) Eye contact: Try to hold the other persons attention by looking directly into their eyes without staring.
 - c) Body movements: Nodding your head occasionally and using hand gestures can help emphasize your position. Avoid distracting or aggressive body movements.
 - d) Facial expressions: People who smile and laugh appropriately during a conversation are more likely to be viewed as a socially effective person.
 - e) Tone and volume of voice: Voice quality should be calm and even with a controlled volume and a speaking rate that is slow enough for others to understand.
8. a) Specific statements
 - b) Repeating or paraphrasing
 - c) Asking for feedback

9. a) Keep your phone out of site (such as in your purse or pocket) when you are with other people.
 - b) Set ringers to silent.
 - c) Avoid personal calls.
 - If texting is permitted for work purposes, avoid using “text language.”
 - Before sending a work text, read over your message.
 - Ensure your ringtone is appropriate for work.
 - Ensure your voicemail greeting and ring back tones are appropriate.
 - Never access social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) from your phone.
10. a) Read each incoming email completely before responding.
 - b) Never write an email while angry.
 - c) Read your own emails before sending.
 - Use spell check.
 - Check the recipient list before sending.
 - Don’t send messages in all capital letters
 - Use secure communication methods for emails related to people receiving support and follow all agency policies that apply to confidentiality

Lesson 3

1. a) Understand the supervisor’s job.
 - b) Keep the supervisor informed on topics that he/she should know about and on the progress of your work.
 - c) Adjust your communication style to your superior’s style.
 - d) Find out the supervisor’s expectations.
 - Represent your supervisor accurately to others.
 - Be reliable.
 - Accept responsibility and be accountable.
2. a) Decide if help is really needed.
 - b) Select the best person to ask for help.
 - c) After greeting the person, explain the problem and be clear in your explanation of exactly what you are asking and why.
 - d) Say “please” when making your request.
 - Be prepared for the person to say no.
 - If refused, respond graciously.
 - Express your gratitude when someone helps you.

3. a) Be sure you completely understand the request before refusing.
 - b) If necessary, postpone your decision until you can properly think it through.
 - c) Carefully consider if there are any serious risks to saying no before you assert yourself.
 - d) Ask yourself, “Is the request part of my job responsibilities and within the scope of the duties I am paid to perform?”
 - When you turn down a request, be sure to actually use the word “no.”
 - Use assertive body language, such as shaking your head “no.”
 - Acknowledge the person’s disappointment.
 - Give a **brief** reason for the answer.
 - It may be necessary to say “no” several times.
 - It may help to change the topic of conversation.
 - You may want to offer a compromise.
4. a) Speak to the other person in private.
 - b) Direct your comments at the behavior, not at the person.
 - c) Deal with issues as they come up.
5. “Sandwich Technique” - Start with a positive statement, be specific about what is bothering you, and make suggestions about how the person can change the problem behavior.
6. a) Try to stay calm and avoid becoming defensive.
 - b) Ask what it is that is specifically bothering the person criticizing you.
 - c) Acknowledging the person’s feelings.
 - d) Sometimes it helps if you can paraphrase the criticism.
 - If the criticism is fair and the person has a good point, you might ask for specific suggestions on how you could behave differently.
 - If you disagree with the criticism, calmly let the person know why.
 - It may be helpful to calmly share some of your feelings about the criticism.
 - Propose a compromise.
 - If the criticism is on target, say you are sorry.

Lesson 4

1. Conflict
2. Caused or created; continue
3. Win-win
4. **IDENTIFY** the conflict or problem. This should take into account all appropriate points of view.

DETERMINE what has created the problem and causes it to persist.

DECIDE on a goal and identifying alternative solutions. Once the problem has been identified, and the causes of the problem have been determined, then strategies can be developed. This can best be accomplished by brainstorming for solutions and identifying additional needs for accomplishing the task.

COMMUNICATE openly. Admit there is a problem and let the other person know what it is, and that you are concerned about it. Be open, straight forward, and clear.

NEGOTIATE a solution. Once a problem has been identified and you are communicating with the other person about it, you are ready to negotiate a solution. Conflict resolution is, when it works best, a win/win activity that takes both points of view into account. Both sides must think the solution is fair.

IMPLEMENT the negotiated solution. Agreeing on a solution is not enough. The agreement must be carried out as planned, or someone will be upset and the conflict cycle will start over again. The participants must try it out and test it to see if it will work.

EVALUATE the effectiveness of the solution.

5. Jargon becomes a form of shorthand that allows staff and professionals to communicate comfortably with each other while excluding others from participating in the decision process.

Lesson 5

1.
 - a) Respect the human rights and individuality of every person.
 - b) Reach out to learn likes, dislikes, and communication styles.
 - c) Use positive communication.
 - d) Be a good role model. Treat people receiving services the way you want them to treat others.
 - Encourage independence and individuality by providing opportunities for people to make choices.
 - Reinforce the use of appropriate social skills.
2.
 - a) Acknowledge each person's attempt at communication – verbal and nonverbal – with responses which show interest and understanding.
 - b) Use language and sentence length appropriate to each person's level of understanding.
 - c) Encourage the person to take the lead in communicative interactions.
 - d) Allow people to express negative feelings.
 - Accept periods of silence. Each person takes a different amount of time to process what others are saying before preparing a response.
 - Refrain from offering reassurance too quickly, changing the conversation topic, or defending individuals they may criticize.
 - Use helpful messages rather than ones that block communication.

3. a) Find common ground with coworkers in terms of communication. Get to know certain words and phrases that are common to each person's vocabulary. This will improve the effectiveness of communication.
- b) Consider the person's experience/exposure with technology.
- c) Allow additional processing time.
 - Utilize appropriate body language and eye contact.
 - Respect body distance and touch.
 - Be aware of gender roles from different cultures.
 - Be aware of cultural viewpoints.
 - Ask questions about differences.
 - If someone expresses discomfort with certain communication, do your best to honor those feelings.

Adapted from:

A Training Program to Prepare Teachers to Supervise & Work Effectively with Paraprofessionals (2nd Edition, 1989). New York. The NRC for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services.

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