



Objectives:

Overview of communication skills

Overview of emotions in communication

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References:

PHI National - Coaching Supervision: Introductory Skills for Supervisors in Home and Residential Care

https://info.ncdhhs.gov/dhsr/hcpr/curriculum/pdf/57_Module%2011%20Communication%20Script_FINAL.pdf

NCDHHS/DHSR/HCPECJIN AT I Curriculum – July 2019

Listen more and speak less to improve communication.



Communication Skills

As an In-home aide, good communication is essential in the day-to-day interaction between you, your client, and your supervisor. We are always communicating, even if we are not talking. Communication is a two-way process of *sending messages* and *receiving them*. People may think you are communicating one thing when you really mean to communicate something else. The most important part of communicating with clients and families is listening. Emotional influence (how a person is feeling at the time that he/she receives information) can change the meaning of that information to the recipient. High emotions can interfere with rational thought. For example, if the client has just received bad news from his/her doctor, the client may be upset so they do not remember other parts of that same conversation. Using closed ended questions can be a barrier to effective communication. By only asking yes/no questions, you may not get a complete or accurate answer. Asking open-ended questions enables the In-home aide to receive more information and have more of a conversation with a client. An example of a closed question vs. an open question is “did you have a good day” requiring a yes or no answer vs. “can you tell me about your day” requiring a more open dialogue? A person with Alzheimer’s disease may do better with a yes or no question. A link to *Do’s and Don’ts: Communicating with a Person Who Has Alzheimer’s Disease* from the National Institute on Aging is at- <https://www.nia.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2023-10/communicating-and-alzheimers.pdf>

Reporting is a part of communication. Reporting accurate information through observation and interaction with the client is an important role for an In-home aide as part of observing, recording, and reporting. It is important to communicate facts, not assumptions or personal opinions to your supervisor and anyone else you are to communicate with according to the client’s plan of care.

When we communicate, we convey thoughts and ideas, we transmit feelings, and exchange information. Communication can mean various things. Physically, communication involves hearing, reading, interpreting, speaking and motor coordination. It takes at least two people to communicate, and communication occurs when the **listener understands the sender’s message**. Messages are sent in many ways. This is done through speaking, listening, writing, reading, and body language. A person may have a barrier to verbal or written communication due to a medical condition such as inability to speak due to a stroke, vision or hearing impairment, or a cognitive impairment such as dementia. In these circumstances you will need to ask for special instructions on how to assist the client with any communication assistive devices or techniques. If you are working with a hearing impaired client, the client’s record should show what methods to use to communicate successfully. Some clients may wear hearing aids. Discuss with your supervisor if you notice any changes in your client’s ability to communicate and follow the plan of care for your client. There are a number of assistive devices that can be used: a hearing aid, personal communicator, teletype, amplified telephone, TV volume amplifier, and others. Be sure to know what device (s) the client uses, that it is close at hand and understand how to best use the device and if there are any special instructions.

Communication Skills Key Concepts:

- *Good listening is essential to clear, effective communication.* When people listen with their full attention, they remember and understand more of what is being communicated. Active Listening is listening to someone without interrupting, asking questions to make sure you understand what they are saying, repeating back to the person what you thought you heard them say and what you think they mean, eye contact (also consider cultural differences in which direct eye contact may not be desired) and paying attention without distractions. Listening is essential to the communication process. Good listening involves the use of eyes, ears, and feelings. It takes energy, concentration, and effort to be a good listener. You must decide you want to be a better listener to develop and improve your listening skills. Listening for feeling is also important. Being listened to attentively feels caring and helpful to a speaker. Not being listened to, or being listened to in an inattentive manner, feels hurtful and unhelpful.
- Since people often respond to body language rather than to words, it is necessary to become aware of your own body language and learn to use this type of communication more effectively. When we communicate, we are constantly using body language and at times, the body language may not match the spoken word (example is someone saying they are not upset when they have a scowl on their face, roll their eyes and stand rigid with their arms folded). We use communication to pass along information and knowledge and to relate to each other as human beings. *What we say, how we say it, and what we mean has an impact on others that could be positive or negative.* An example could be a teacher of a young child, one teacher could be caring and use caring words, another could use harsh and demeaning words. We cannot control other people or situations (external), but we can control how we communicate (internal) such as voice, body language, facial expression, eye contact and behavior towards other.
- Non- Verbal Communication - using body language such as movements, facial expressions, gestures, posture, gait, eye contact and appearance to send a message and can be used to support or oppose spoken or written communication. Examples of non-verbal communication include:
 - Positive - face the client while speaking, stand up straight, smile, nod with approval, place arms at sides, show relaxed movements.
 - Negative - turn your back during communication, slouch, avoid eye contact, eye roll, frown, cross arms across chest, show tense movements.
 - ❖ If your client has difficulty communicating, you may observe nonverbal communication (behavior, body language, expression) that the client may be using to express their emotions and needs. As you spend time with the client, you can make note of what you observe with the client's behavior, what is happening and what you think it means. Such as when Ms. Smith does _____ (fill in behavior), I think it means _____ (fill in what you think it means), this may help other caregivers in understanding the client's use of non-verbal communication and emotions to express what they need and what certain behaviors may mean. This could help in the care plan process with a client who has difficulty communicating to understand what certain behaviors may mean. Discuss your observations with your supervisor and follow the plan of care for your client.

Communication Skills- Responding to Stressful Situations:

- *People's emotional responses to what others communicate, verbally or nonverbally, often get in the way of their ability to listen with full attention.* Managing yourself in emotionally charged situations is an important skill in communication. Good communication and problem solving can only come from clear and objective thinking. We cannot control other people or situations (external), but we can control how we communicate (internal) such as voice, body language, facial expression, eye contact and behavior towards other.
- While people rarely can control others' words or behavior, *each person can control his or her own emotional responses to a situation.* Shifting personal internal responses makes it possible to listen more attentively. The resulting communication is more effective and more positive.
- The first step in shifting emotional responses to someone's words, tone of voice, or behavior is to become consciously aware of those responses.
- When a person is listening attentively, he or she can make a conscious choice to pull back from negative judgments and stereotypes, to remain curious about the other person, and to stay open to possibly changing his or her opinion about the speaker. Pulling back is the ability to gain emotional control in stressful settings and generally leads to more effective communication. Pulling back is the ability to pause and get emotions under control, and to clearly observe and assess a problem situation.
- Steps for pulling back include noticing your emotional reactions and judgements, freeze framing your reaction and put it aside, and put your attention back on the other person.
- There are behaviors, people or situations that can trigger your emotions. Sometimes you are faced with situations and people who provoke an emotional response, it could be anger, hurt, frustration, hopelessness, or sadness. When you are in an emotional state, listening becomes difficult and communication becomes charged. You always have a choice in how you respond.
- Challenge- *Think about what provokes an emotional response for you and think of ways you can calm yourself down in those situations.*
 - **When a person provokes your emotions, you have a choice:**
- You can respond based on your emotions, defend your opinions, prepare your response. You can look for evidence to support your opinions, and discount evidence to the contrary, **or**
- You can pull back from your emotions, suspend your opinions, and put them on hold. You can listen actively without blocks or judgements; you can engage in non-charged conversation. You can look with curiosity for new information or insights. You can stay open to changing your opinion.
- When you respond based on your emotions, it generally leads to difficulty thinking clearly, an inability to listen, difficulty in being open to believing or trusting the other person, being judgmental, feeling justified or self-righteous, blaming the other person, holding onto anger, resentment, and mistrust, and a self-fulfilling prophecy that in the future, the person will most likely act in the negative way we expect.
- When you pull back from your emotions, it generally leads to clear thinking, more appropriate communication, more empathy for those who think, see, and believe differently, nonjudgmental responses, having more information, and therefore a better understanding of the whole situation. It also generally leads to defusing anger, building trust, problem solving that involves both parties resulting in mutual ownership in the solution, and a self-fulfilling prophecy that in the future, the person will most likely act in the positive way we expect.
 - **Pulling back means:**
- Being able to pause, getting one's emotions under control, and then, clearly observing and assessing the situation, before responding.
 - **Steps for pulling back:**
- Notice your internal reaction and judgments, freeze your reaction, and put it aside, and put your attention back on the other person.

Click the link below to access the quiz:

[April Newsletter Quiz](#)