

Communication-more than just words

Basic principles of communication include verbal and non-verbal communication. We are communicating, even when we are not using words, with our body language.

Effective communication is critical in Home Care for many reasons.

- First of all, effective communication skills are needed in order for you to talk to your supervisor and communicate any needed changes in your schedule due to personal issues that may come up such as sickness, appointments, car trouble, etc.
- You need to be able to communicate to your supervisor when you feel like you need more training and education on a task assigned to you for your client's care or if you are having problems effectively communicating with your client's who have Alzheimer's or other communication difficulties.
- Effective communication with your clients is important in understanding how they like certain tasks done or how they are feeling or if there are changes in their conditions. Communication skills are important in working with a client with dementia due to the unique communication skills needed.

What You Will Learn:

*Importance of effective communication-basic principles

*Skills for effective communication: listening; self management; self awareness

*How emotions affect communication.



Did you know? Emotional responses can get in the way of listening! (see attached scenario)

- **People's emotional responses to what others communicate, verbally or non-verbally; often get in the way of their ability to listen with full attention.**
- **While people rarely are able to control other's words or behavior, each person can control his or her own emotional responses to a situation. Shifting personal internal responses (how you are feeling inside) makes it possible to listen with more attention. 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 (how you are feeling) and work on gaining emotional control.**

Key concepts in communication:

- **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.**
- **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.**

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What about Emotions? (From Daniel Goleman's work with Emotional Intelligence)

Managing Emotions- Handling feelings so that they are appropriate; realizing what is behind a feeling; finding ways to handle fears and anxieties, anger and sadness.

Empathy- Sensitivity to others' feelings and concerns, understanding their perspective, appreciating the differences in how people feel about things.

Listening Skills – It's an Art!

The goal is to understand not just the words the person is saying but the **meaning** the person is trying to get across.

1. Stop talking. You can't listen if you are doing all the talking.
2. Be patient. Count to 20. Take a breath.
3. Do not interrupt. The person may need extra time to express what he or she wishes to say.
4. Show interest. Let the person know that you care what he or she is trying to say. Maintain eye contact, and stay near the person.
5. Double-check understanding. Avoid assuming that the person understands you. The person may even say he or she understands what you have said but still not understand at all.
6. Use active listening skills. Nodding the head, leaning forward, using touch, saying "Yes" "I see", repeating back what you have heard, and making eye contact are some of the active listening techniques you may use.

Tips For Practicing These Skills

Try to listen to someone for five minutes without interrupting them, be sure to use your non-verbal skills such as eye contact, not being distracted, asking questions and repeat anything unclear to make sure you have a clear understanding of what the other person is saying. You can practice this with someone at home, at work, a friend, etc. and ask for their feedback on how you listened and if they felt heard and understood!

All of the communication skills require patience and practice, but they can ensure that your communication is effective communication!

"When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen."

— [Ernest Hemingway](#)

Skills That Can Be Developed In Learning How To Communicate More Effectively Are:

Active Listening - This is when you listen to someone without interrupting them, 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, having eye contact and paying attention without distractions. This takes effort!

Self Management – This is when you "pull back" on emotional reactions you may have when someone says something that bothers you. This is when you try to stick to the facts of the conversation and not on your emotions. Self management also means you really focus on the conversation and that you do not let your mind wander on other thoughts when someone is talking with you. Self management leaves the "drama" out and keeps emotions in check.

Self Awareness - Realizing that we all have different personalities and that this can affect how we deal with others and how they deal with us is part of self awareness. For example, if you are a "big-picture" personality type you are the opposite of a "detail" personality type. A big picture oriented personality may become bored with nitty-gritty details such as with the "detail" required in the aide notes and log that has to be completed to meet an agency's rules and regulations. Understanding that our personality type can cause a need for us to "stretch" in our thinking to do our jobs correctly is important to doing a good job and to make sure your agency is able to follow the rules they are required to follow.

Sources- Coaching Supervision Curriculum- PHI, NY, 2008
Being In the Moment- Karen Stobbe- April 2008

For more information on AHHC's endorsed risk management and insurance program, visit:
<http://www.homeandhospicecare.org/insurance/home.html>



Mrs. Jones and Helen- take one-not so helpful-

Mrs. Jones, (the wife and caregiver of Mr. Jones, your client)- Helen, I am sick with something that seems like the flu, I am so weak, is there any way you could prepare lunch for Mr. Jones today.

Helen, the In-Home Aide- No I can't, it is not on my plan of care and I am not supposed to do anything that is not on my plan of care.

Mrs. Jones- could you do it just this once?

Helen- No I can't (with eye roll).

Mrs. Jones- it seems like you could help me this one time

Helen- I am really tired of everyone asking me to do things that are not on my plan of care that is just the way it is, I would think you would be glad that I am here to help Mr. Jones at all or you would have to do everything.

Mrs. Jones and Helen- take two with active listening, empathy and keeping emotions under control-

Mrs. Jones, (the wife and caregiver of Mr. Jones, your client)- Helen, I am sick with something that seems like the flu, I am so weak, is there any way you could prepare lunch for Mr. Jones today.

Helen, the In-Home Aide- Well, it is not on my plan of care and I am supposed to follow the plan of care as written, but, I will be glad to call my office and talk to my supervisor and check to see if this is something that would be okay to add as a temporary change.

Mrs. Jones- oh that would be so helpful; I am so weak, I am not hardly able to stand up to even prepare him a sandwich.

Helen- I am sorry that you are sick and I do hope you are feeling better soon.

Mrs. Jones- I hate to ask you to do more than you already do but you are a life saver!

Helen- I understand, I can tell you are not yourself today, I will check with my supervisor and if it's okay, I will prepare lunch for Mr. Jones today.

9. People's emotional responses to what others communicate, verbally or non-verbally; often get in the way of their ability to listen with full attention. (Check the correct answer)

True

False

10. With listening, the goal is to understand not just the words the person is saying but the _____ the person is trying to get across. (fill in the blank)