

Communication Skills

Skills associated with active listening are particularly important when confronting someone about their behaviour and/or job performance. Use of these skills will help to defuse emotional arousal in the other parties and will help to provide the information everyone needs to effectively resolve the situation. Implicit in every intervention is the ability to communicate to others that you are concerned about their feelings and needs, and that you want to hear their view of the situation and their ideas for solutions.

Attending Body Language

It is important to use attending body language when listening. This includes facing the other person, using non-threatening body language, utilize a *soft gaze* versus eye contact, maintaining an open posture, while respecting personal space. The use of a supportive stance/body position is also important.

Reflection of Feeling

In Reflection of Feeling, the goal is to identify the essence of the individual's feelings, to formulate and express a response that indicates that you understand, using your own words.

Paraphrasing of Content

In Paraphrasing, the intervener's goal is to determine the basic message in the client's statement(s) or expression, and to concisely re-phrase it.

Summarizing: Feelings and Content

It is important to reflect back to others what you hear them saying about both facts (content) and feelings. This communicates to them that you are listening and gives you a chance to check out if you are hearing them correctly.

- "You are really angry because you can't get to sleep."
- "You think that Mr. Jones hit you to get revenge."
- "You were embarrassed because your supervisor might have heard what I said."

Feedback and the Impact on Others

In order to communicate effectively we must let the other person know how we are responding to what they are saying. It is important to take responsibility for our feedback using "I" messages to state how we are feeling or what action we think needs to occur.

- "I start feeling defensive when you say I'm stupid."
- "I agree with you on that part."
- "I could hear what you need to tell me better if you would speak more quietly."

Probing

The goal in Probing is to direct the individual's attention inward and to explore his/her situation (using open-ended questions). This can help the individual focus her/his attention on a feeling/content area, and enhance their understanding of the situation or feeling.

Source: Addiction Counselling Manual. Addiction Research Foundation. Toronto, 1987.