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## **PROMOTING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

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**Effective Communication**  
**Promoting Positive Self-Esteem**  
**Stress Management**  
**Promoting Assertiveness**  
**Promoting Social Skills**  
**Promoting Problem Solving**



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## PROMOTING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

**T**his section of the guide provides information on how to be an effective communicator. Often workplace difficulties can be attributed to problems with communication. For this reason it is important to both examine your current communication style and consider alternative approaches. This section will help you with the following:

- ◆ Effective Communication
- ◆ Promoting Positive Self-Esteem
- ◆ Stress Management
- ◆ Promoting Assertiveness
- ◆ Promoting Social Skills
- ◆ Promoting Problem Solving

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

As a Direct Support Provider (DSP) you may assist others with their communication skills. In order to do this **you** need to be a good communicator.

### A good communicator:

- ◆ Clearly communicates messages to the listener
- ◆ Demonstrates understanding of both verbal and nonverbal messages sent by others
- ◆ Shows consideration for the other person's feelings

A model for keeping communication supportive and creating minimal difficulties was developed by psychologist, Jack Gibb. In order for communication to be helpful he recommends the following:

### 1 Describe Actions Objectively

- ◆ Do say, "You were 20 minutes late picking me up this morning." This is an **objective** description.
- ◆ Do not say, "You were so unreliable this morning." This is a **judgmental** description.

### 2 Present the Problem as Information

- ◆ Do say, "I guess we want to do two different things tonight. What should we do?" This recognizes different goals but presents the **problem as information**.
- ◆ Do not say, "I know you want to go to a play but tonight we'll go to a movie. I already checked out the times." While this statement also recognizes different goals, it **presents the problem in a controlling way** (by forcing a solution upon the other person).



### 3 Be Genuine

- ◆ Do say, “I’m concerned about this.” This is an example of a **genuine** expression of thoughts or feelings.
- ◆ Do not say, “Everybody is concerned about this.” This is an example of **sneaky** communication. (Not everyone is concerned, just the individual speaking is concerned.)

### 4 Showing empathy

- ◆ Do say, “I can see you feel very strongly about that,” even if you have a different opinion about the issue. This shows consideration for the other person.
- ◆ Do not say, “Whatever.” This communicates a **lack of concern** and sends the message that the other person’s views or goals are not important.

### 5 Communicating equality

- ◆ Do say, “I understand you have a concern about what I did this morning.” This sends the message that the other person has as much worth as you do.
- ◆ Do not say, “How dare you question what I did?” This sends the message that the speaker thinks they are

**superior** to the person being spoken to.

## ⑥ Keeping an open mind

- ◆ Do say, “The route I usually take to work is pretty quick.” This communicates that you are not making a final judgment about the **only** quick way to go to work.
- ◆ Do not say, “My route is faster.” This communicates that you are **certain** about being right and are not open to the other person’s knowledge or experience.

If you are aware of these strategies and use them in your conversations with others, your communication will be effective.



*“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.”*



*Anthony Robbins*

## PROMOTING POSITIVE SELF-ESTEEM

Communicating to build self-esteem is something which is within your power as a DSP. Self-esteem is how **good** we feel about ourselves. Self-esteem can be damaged by criticism and negative comments. However, as a DSP you can promote positive self-esteem by doing the following:

- ➔ *Showing acceptance*
- ➔ *Communicating respect*
- ➔ *Recognizing a person’s skills, talents, and interests*
- ➔ *Encouraging discovery of new talents and interests*
- ➔ *Valuing the person’s efforts to become more independent and self-reliant*

*To value his own good opinion, a child has to feel that he is a worthwhile person. He has to have confidence in himself as an individual.*



*Sidonie Gruenberg*

## Activities

### Promoting Positive Self-Esteem

Think of a time when someone communicated to you in a way which left you feeling badly.

- ◆ Did you feel you were being judged?
- ◆ Did you feel you were being controlled?
- ◆ Did you feel the person was hiding their motives?
- ◆ Did you feel there was a lack of concern for you?
- ◆ Did you feel you were being treated as an inferior?
- ◆ Did you feel the person was unwilling to consider your viewpoint?

All of these practices can decrease self-esteem. Instead, use the Gibb strategies listed earlier under the title **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**.

## STRESS MANAGEMENT

Everyone has stress in their life and sometimes that stress can reach serious health-affecting levels if not managed effectively.

### Signs of Stress

- ➡ Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- ➡ Difficulty focusing thoughts
- ➡ Overreacting to situations or comments



- ➔ Difficulty handling changes
- ➔ Making poor decisions
- ➔ Being easily frustrated
- ➔ Increasing the use of drugs or alcohol
- ➔ Nail biting, hair twisting, pacing, grinding teeth

### Strategies for Managing Stress

- **Physical:** have a balanced diet, get enough sleep, exercise regularly
- **Thoughts:** be realistic about goals, and about expectations of others
- **Emotional:** maintain a sense of humour and express your feelings
- **Organizational:** know which tasks are most important and do those first





## Activities

### Stress Management

Identify three action steps you can take to help reduce stress in your life.

## PROMOTING ASSERTIVENESS

Assertive people have the ability to understand their own wishes and needs. You can encourage others to become more assertive by helping them:

- ◆ Determine their own preferences and needs
- ◆ Determine the possible outcomes, both positive and negative, from speaking up in a particular situation
- ◆ Construct a message that is clear and understandable
- ◆ Feel confident enough to speak up
- ◆ Remain calm when others disagree with them

### Assertive, Passive, and Aggressive Communication

In **Assertive** communication, you value your own needs and are able to express them to others, while at the same time respecting the needs of others. Assertive communication often indicates high self-esteem and self-confidence.

In **Passive** communication, you devalue your own needs to the point that you allow others to meet their needs at your expense. You may not say

what you are thinking or feeling unless you know that others think and feel the same way. If you have very low self esteem this may be your only style of communicating with others.

In **Aggressive** communication you will try to get your needs met regardless of how it affects the feelings or goals of the other person. You may take over, not seek input, and constantly challenge any ideas or feelings that you do not agree with. Other examples of aggressive behaviour include insults, threats, and sarcasm.

The following box shows examples of how these three styles might play out in a situation involving two housemates with different needs. One person needs sleep and the other needs to socialize and let off steam by having a party. The examples look at how the person needing sleep expresses their position in each of the three styles.

Examples of the Three Major Styles of Expressing Needs	
<i>Passive</i>	<i>I would listen to the other person planning the party without saying anything. During the party I would not complain (out loud) and I would simply go without sleep.</i>
<i>Aggressive</i>	<i>I would tell my housemate the party's off and when he objects, I would accuse him of being a selfish and thoughtless person who obviously cares about no one but himself.</i>
<i>Assertive</i>	<i>I would tell my housemate how much I need sleep, and how hard it is going to be for me to get to sleep if there is a party. I would also let him know that I understand how much he is looking forward to the chance to party tonight.</i>

The assertive approach is healthy for both ourselves and for others. But, assertiveness does require more courage than a passive approach and much more self-control than an aggressive style.

## Activities

### Promoting Assertiveness

- 1 Describe an assertive statement that addresses a situation you are currently facing. Begin by saying, "I need (or want) \_\_\_\_\_."
- 2 Ask yourself:
  - ▶ How clear is my message?
  - ▶ How free of judgment and aggression is my message?
  - ▶ How confident can I appear and sound?



## PROMOTING SOCIAL SKILLS

As a DSP, you may have the opportunity of supporting an individual to learn and practice social skills. You may make a valuable contribution to increasing his or her social competence. Promoting social skills involves **modeling** them.

Social skills refer to a wide range of behaviors considered desirable by the culture in which they occur. In North American culture, for example, it is considered desirable for citizens to say “please” and “thank you.” Failure to do so means we run the risk of being seen as rude or impolite.

In North America, **Social Skills** include:

- ➔ Taking turns
- ➔ Sharing
- ➔ Having patience
- ➔ Offering assistance
- ➔ Responding when being addressed by another

**Six Key Social Skills are:**

- 1** Remaining **relaxed** in social situations
- 2** Effectively listening, including **letting others know you are listening**
- 3** Empathizing with and **showing interest** in others' situations
- 4** **Building rapport** (open and warm communication)
- 5** Knowing when and how much to **talk about yourself**

## 6 Making appropriate **eye contact**



### Activities

#### Promoting Social Skills

- ◆ Identify a rude behavior that you are personally guilty of using.
- ◆ What is a more respectful way of communicating?
- ◆ Is there anything preventing you from using the more respectful way?



## PROMOTING PROBLEM SOLVING

As a DSP you will be called upon at times to solve problems. If you follow the principles and strategies outlined in this section you will become a more competent problem solver. You will also be more effective at supporting others to become better problem solvers.

### Stages of Problem Solving

#### Stage One – What is the Problem?

- ➔ **Recognize a problem exists.** Admit you are dissatisfied with something.
- ➔ **Define the problem.** e.g. “I need privacy to work on my assignments, and when you invite all your friends over I cannot have privacy unless I leave the house.”
- ➔ **Decide if action is needed.** How unhappy am I? What will happen if nothing is done? For how long can I tolerate the current situation?

## Stage Two – Who is Involved?

- ➔ *Determine who you need to talk to. Include anyone who is part of the problem.*

## Stage Three – State the Problem

- ➔ *Share your perception of the problem*
- ➔ *Ask them to tell you their perception of the problem*
- ➔ *Take turns identifying possible solutions*
- ➔ *Discuss each solution for its merits*
- ➔ *Agree on one solution you can try*

## Stage Four – Test Drive a Solution

- ➔ *Try out the solution*
- ➔ *Evaluate how well the solution worked*
- ➔ *Make changes to the solution as needed*

The opposite of problem solving is denial that there is a problem. Sometimes we do this because we are hoping the problem will go away simply with the passing of time or new developments. But many problems, particularly in relationships, only get worse when they are ignored.





Activities

## Promoting Problem Solving

Reflect on a time when you had a problem which you did talk to someone about. Did you:

- ◆ Share it with the right person?
- ◆ Non-judgmentally share your perception of the problem?
- ◆ Encourage them to share their perception?
- ◆ Brainstorm possible solutions together?
- ◆ Agree on a solution to try?

### So . . .

There are many skills involved in effective communication. As a DSP you will have opportunities to model these communication skills and to help the individuals you support to solve problems, manage stress, develop social skills, and be assertive. These skills are helpful for anyone who wants to work well with others.

## Resources

Adler, R. B., Towne, N., & Rolls, J. A. (2001). **Looking Out Looking In, First Canadian Edition**. Philadelphia, New York, Toronto: Harcourt College Publishers.

For more information on Jack Gibb go to

<http://www.geocities.com/toritrust/index.html>

For more on stress go to HELPGUIDE.org at

[http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress\\_signs.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_signs.htm)

For more information on Social Skills go to

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_skills](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_skills)

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Resources