

TECHNIQUES OF COMMUNICATION

Technique	Description	Example
Broad opening statements	To allow the other person to pick the topic, take the initiative to express self, and set the direction of the conversation.	Where would you like to begin? What is on your mind today? What are you thinking about? Is there anything you would like to discuss?
Offering general leads	Encourages the other person to continue and express interest in what comes next.	Go on. And then? Tell me about it.
Exploring	Examines certain ideas, experiences, or relationships more fully.	Tell me more about that. What kind of relationship do you have with that person? Could you talk about how you felt when you went through that life experience?
Focusing	Helps the other person focus on a certain point when they are jumping from topic to topic.	Let's stop and look more closely at your feelings about that initial subject. You've mentioned many things. Let's go back to your thinking the initial subject.
Silence	Provides time for the other person to put thoughts or feelings into words, regain composure or continue talking.	Maintain an interested, expectant silence.
Accepting	Indicated the other person has been understood. It does not indicate agreement and is nonjudgmental.	Uh-hmm. Yes. I'm following you. Nodding.
Giving recognition	Indicated awareness of change in personal efforts. Does not imply good or bad, right or wrong.	Good morning, Mr. Jones. I see you have put on your jewelry today. You've finished your list of things to do.
Offering self	Offers presence, interest, and a desire to listen to the other person.	I'll sit with you for a while. I would like to spend some time with you. I'm available if you need to talk.
Making observations	Observe the other persons physical behavior or emotional state. Dont be a mind reader. Instead, ask what thy are thinking and feeling.	Are you upset? Why are you are biting your lip? How are you?
Restating/ Paraphrasing	Repeating the main idea in order to clarify that you heard the other person correctly. Restating another's message more briefly using one's own words. Understanding the other persons perspective doesnt mean you agree or disagree.	Wow, it sounds to me that you said you didnt agree with the speaker
Reflecting	Directing questions, feelings and ideas back to the patient.	Friend: "What do you think I should do about telling my employer about my

	Acknowledges the patient's right to have opinions and make decisions.	illness?" You: "What have you been thinking about this situation?" Friend: "Everyone ignores me".
Providing Information	Makes facts available in order to assist in decision-making or drawing conclusions.	This medication is for you high blood pressure. This test will determine your treatment options. My purpose for being here is.....
Acknowledging feelings (empathy)	To help the other person know that feelings are understood and accepted.	I hear what your saying. I understand why you feel that way.
Clarifying	To make clear that which is vague or maximize understanding between you and the other person.	I am not sure I follow you. What would you say the main point of what you said was? Can you give me an example?
Verbalizing implied thoughts and feelings	To voice what the other person has implied. To verify impressions to help the other person more fully aware of feelings expressed.	You stopped talking, does that mean youd like to resume this conversation later?
Sharing humor	Discharge of energy through comic enjoyment of the imperfect. Can reduce tension and promote mental well-being. Must be used carefully and sparingly.	This gives a whole new meaning to "just relax".
Seeking consensual validation	Searching for mutual understanding especially when slang terms have been used.	Tell me whether my understanding of it agrees with yours. Are you using this word to convey that ...?
Encouraging comparison	Brings out recurrent themes by looking at similarities or differences.	Was it something like.....? Have you had a similar experience? Has this ever happened before?
Encouraging evaluation	Assists the other person in considering things from their own set of values or perspective.	What did it mean to you when they made that statement? How do you feel about your impending divorce?
Encouraging description of perception	Asking the other person to verbalize things from their own perspective.	Tell me what is happening right now? Tell me what you are thinking and/or feeling ?
Placing the event in time or in sequence	To help the other person recall events, see cause and effect, and/ or identify patterns of events and actions.	When did this happen? What seemed to lead up to....? Was it before or after....?
Presenting	Indicated what is real without	Your mother is not here. I am your husband

reality	arguing. Presenting the facts of a situation.	I see no one else in the room.
Voicing doubt	Expressing uncertainty about the reality of the patient's perceptions. The patient can become aware that others do not necessarily perceive things in the same way. This is not an attempt to get the patient to change their point of view.	Really? That's hard to believe. Isn't that unusual.
Selecting appropriate timing	Choose a time when the other person can really attend too what is being said. Choose times when the other person is not distracted or pre-occupied .	I have something important to say, is this a good time? When your free, I really need to talk. When you finish this level, I need your help.
Sharing hope	Communicating a sense of possibility to achieve their potential. Commenting on the positive aspects of the other persons behavior, performance, and responses.	I believe you will find a way to face your situation because I have seen your courage and creativity. You got this !
Encouraging formulation of an action plan	Asking the other person to consider alternative kinds of behavior likely to be appropriate in future situations	What could you do to let your anger out harmlessly? Next time this comes up, how might you handle it? What are other ways you could approach your boss?
Summarizing	Concise review of the key aspects of the interaction to bring a sense of satisfaction and closure.	During the past hour, you and I have discussed..... We have discussed many ways to deal with the problem. You have agreed to try a few solutions and let me know how it works out.
Self-disclosure	GENERALIZED sharing of personal experiences about the self to benefit the other person.	That happened to me once, too. It was devastating, and I had to face some things about myself that I didn't like. I went for counseling, and it really helped....What are your thoughts about seeing a therapist?
Confrontation	Helping the other person become aware of inconsistencies in feelings, attitudes, beliefs or behaviors.	You say you have already decided what to do, yet you are still talking a lot about your options.
Recommend or suggest options (do not advise)	Allows the other person to consider options they may not have previously considered	Have you thought about....? Here are some things other people in your situation have considered.....?



COMMON BARRIERS IN COMMUNICATION

Technique	Description	Example
Giving advice	Imposes your own opinion and solutions on the other person. Implies the other person cannot make own decisions.	What you should do is.... Why don't you..... Get out of that situation immediately. I would leave that person if they did that to me.
False reassurance	Attempts to dispel anxiety by implying there is not sufficient reason for concern.	Don't worry, everything will be all right. You're doing fine. I wouldn't worry about that. I've felt that way myself sometimes.
Stereotyped comments/ clichés	Automatic responses like these are belittling to the other persons experience. Minimizes the significance of the patient's feelings.	Everything happens for a reason. God doesn't give you more than you can handle. Keep your chin up. Everyone gets down in the dumps.
Giving approval/ disapproval	Not person-centered. Opinions and conclusions should come exclusively from the other person. You should stay neutral. Both can cause the need to please you and dependency to make decisions.	That's good thinking. Great job! I agree. I'm glad that..... That's bad for you. I'd rather you wouldn't
Agreeing/ Disagreeing	Implies right and wrong, good or bad from the other persons point of view. Now, if they changes their mind, they are "wrong". Limits their freedom to think or act in a certain way.	That's the right attitude. I agree. You must be right. That's not true. You're wrong.
Requesting an explanation- "Why" questions	"Why" questions can also imply right or wrong and may be perceived as threatening or intimidating. If the other person doesn't know the answer they may become defensive.	Why do you think that? Why do you feel that way? Why are you upset? Tell me why you did that?
Sympathy	Sympathy may be a compassionate response but can also be taken negatively depending on the other persons emotional state.	I'm so sorry that your house was burned down. It must be terrible. I'm so sorry you lost your mother.
Defensive responses	Suggests criticism is unfounded and that the other person has no right to voice their opinion.	I cant believe No one here would
Changing the subject	You takes the initiative for the interaction away from the other person, which is usually due to your discomfort.	Friend: "I can't stop thinking about what happened yesterday" You: "Let's go out for dinner."

Arguing	Denies that the patient's perception was real or accurate.	How can you say you didn't sleep a wink when I heard you snoring all night?
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BASIC COMMUNICATION RULES

- 1. Timing is important in getting your point across. Be careful to choose a time when the other person can actively listen to what is being said. It is difficult to send a message when the other person is distracted or preoccupied with something else.**
- 2. Use direct communication. But remember that once a message is sent, it can never be taken back. During moment of high uncontrollable emotions, just have the conversation at a later time. A good rule is to say what you mean and mean what you say.**
- 3. Dont be a mind reader. Dont tell the other person what they are thinking or feeling. Instead, ask them.**
- 4. If you are going to offer critcism, be specific. Indicate how the other persons SPECIFIC behavior has a negative effect on you. Do not criticze the entire person or their total personality. By being SPECIFIC, you give the other person the option of changing their behaviors without feeling the need to "defend"themselves. But remeber too that a criticism can be true and still be useless in helping the other person to change.**
- 5. Try to use " I feel" rather than "You are" messages.**
- 6. Avoid blanket generalizationssuch as, "You always...." or "You never....." It is more helpful to descibe the SPECIFIC instances of behaviors which concern you.**
- 7. Your first response after a statement should be to clarify what you heard the other person say. It is irrevelevant of whether you agree or disagree. Once the message was confirmed, then you can give your response. The cycle continues until the conversation ends.**
- 8. Try to avoid polarization into categories where one person is right/good and the other person is wrong/bad. Remember there are honest differences between people that are based on the way they were raised, their religion, their age, their socioeconomic status, their values, their life experiences, their ethnic background, their gender, their needs, and their problem factor.**
- 9. Understand that people dont always agree on the nature of reality because we all perceive it differently. But those differences are worth exploring and discussing. It could even increase feelings of belonging and connectivness.**
- 10. If the conversation becomes an arguement and neither person is likely to be heard, suggest a "time out". This space gives yourself and the other person time to think about whats been said so far. Return to the conversation when things are calmer and both parties are ready to continue.**