

## 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

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

\*Communication with client's with dementia

### **Best ways to interact with a person with dementia:**

**Identify yourself** - Approach the person from the front. Tell the person who you are.

**Call the person by name** - This is not only courteous, it also helps orient the person and gets his or her attention.

**Use short, simple words and sentences** - Don't overwhelm the person with lengthy requests or stories. Speak in a concise manner. Keep to the point. In some cases, slang words may be helpful.

**Speak slowly and clearly** - Be aware of speed and clarity when speaking.

**Give one-step directions** - Break down tasks and instructions into clear, simple steps. Give one step at a time.

**Ask one question at a time** - Don't overwhelm or confuse the person with too many questions at once.

**Patiently wait for a response** - The person may need extra time to process what you said. Give the person the time and encouragement he or she needs to respond.

**Repeat information or questions** - If the person doesn't respond, wait a moment. Then ask again. Ask the question in the same way, using the same words as before.

**Turn questions into answers** - Try providing the solution rather than the question. For example, say "The bathroom is right here," instead of asking, "Do you need to use the bathroom?"

### **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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Research has shown that people you communicate with will take:

7 % of our words

38 % of vocal characteristics: tone, volume, inflection (your voice)

55 % of body language & facial expressions

~ Professor Albert Mehrabian

## 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!

## 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.

**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.

Henry David Thoreau

*The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer.*

Sources- Coaching Supervision Curriculum- PHI, NY, 2008  
Alzheimer’s Association- Communication,  
Being In the Moment- Karen Stobbe- April 2008

