

Communication Basics

What is communication?

Communication is the transferring information from one place, person or group to another. The desired goal of any communication process is **understanding**.



Modes of communication



Verbal: Includes using your “voice” through face-to-face communication, telephone, radio or television and other media.



Non-verbal: Includes using body language, facial expressions and gestures.



Written: Includes using printed or digital media such as books, magazines, websites or emails



Visuals: Includes using logos, maps, charts or graphs

Communication tips



Maintain a relaxed and open posture while sitting or standing



Nod your head occasionally to show that you are listening



Maintain a friendly expression



Maintain culturally-appropriate eye contact



Avoid distractions like fiddling with things, twiddling your thumbs or tapping your feet



Verbal and non-verbal communication sync

Yes, I have time right now to talk to you

I am very pleased with your work!



It is important to ensure that our verbal and non-verbal communication are aligned with each other. When our body language is different from what we are saying, those listening to us may doubt our sincerity. That is because our audience is processing both our verbal and nonverbal cues at the same time.

When communicating with others, we must be extra cautious of the non-verbal cues we are giving, especially when working in a helping profession such as the work of peer workers.

Barriers to Communication

Barriers to communication

Cultural differences

Communication is very different from culture to culture. As mentioned earlier, a gesture can mean two very different things in different cultures and this can sometimes be a barrier to communication.

Lack of attention/ distractions

Being distracted or doing other things while someone is communicating with you is another barrier to communication. However, note that someone may be distracted because they don't feel safe and are surveying the surroundings.

Physical barriers including disability

Not being able to see the non-verbal cues, gestures, posture and general body language can make communication less effective. Phone calls, text messages and other communication methods that rely on technology are often less effective than face-to-face communication.

Expectations and prejudices

Expectations and prejudices can often lead to false assumptions or stereotyping of a person or group of people. Sometimes, people hear what they expect to hear rather than what is actually said and jump to incorrect conclusions.

Use of jargon or unfamiliar terms

Another barrier is the use of jargon or technical, or unfamiliar language. It is important to use language that can be understood by your audience. As peer workers, you may be familiar with "street terms" for various things.

Stigma through language

- Constant exposure to language that describes the negative can lead to self-stigma and consequently, poor physical and mental health.
- Peer workers have the opportunity to set an example for others by using people-first language and addressing stigma against people who use substances.



Language matters...

4 guidelines to using non-stigmatizing language

- 1 Use People-first language**
Person who uses opioids vs. Opioid user OR Addict
- 2 Use language that reflects the medical nature of substance use disorders**
Person experiencing problems with substance use vs. Abuser OR Junkie
- 3 Use language that promotes recovery**
Person experiencing barriers to accessing services vs. Unmotivated OR Non-compliant
- 4 Avoid slang and idioms**
Positive test results OR Negative test results vs. Dirty test results OR Clean test results

VISIT towardtheheart.com FOR MORE INFORMATION

CREATED BY BCCDC HARM REDUCTION TEAM
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- Language is a powerful tool and it can make or break a relationship. When someone is constantly hearing language that describes only the negative, it's very easy to internalize that into a negative self-identity. This is referred to as self-stigma. Self-stigma deeply affects a person's well-being. It has a powerful effect on one's mental and physical health, as well as on relationships, family systems, work and social life.

Communication Toolkit

Active listening

Focus fully on the speaker

Concentrate on a person's speaking
Pay special attention to body language

Avoid interrupting

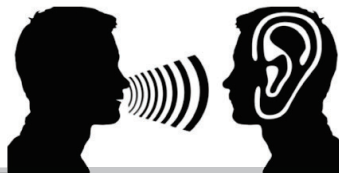
Make notes while listening
Make a goal of listening more than speaking

Avoid judgement

Withhold criticism

Show your interest

Nod occasionally or smile
Keep an open posture



Making effective presentations



Know your audience: Knowing your audience allows you to tailor your message and use simple language, depending on their comfort level with your topic.



Keep it simple: Keep it simple and concentrate on your core message. When it comes to presentations, less is more. Think about the purpose of your presentation.



Use effective visual aids: This is not always required, but depending on where you're presenting, these may be useful.



Present clearly: Present clearly add pauses to your speech. Try to make your speech engaging. When the audience is able to understand what you're saying, they will stay engaged and you will achieve the results you're hoping to achieve from your presentation.



Use your body: Do not only present with your voice, but your entire body. Using your hands and facial expressions can help to add emphasis. Don't forget to smile - It will show your confidence.



Practice: Practice! Rehearse in front of a mirror or practice with a friend or colleague.

Having difficult conversations

Prepare before having the conversation

- Identify examples of actual behavior
- Describe what you would like to be done differently

Explain using clean language

- Avoid using labeling words

Choose an appropriate time and place

- Find a safe space without distractions

Don't dilute your message or its impact

- Wait for their response
- Ask open questions

Encourage

- Finish on a positive and encouraging note

Communication Toolkit

Making an ask



Many of us are much better at asking for other people. So first, imagine that your request isn't for you, but for someone you care deeply about.

Explain the reason for your ask. This won't usually be difficult to do since there must be a reason you're asking in the first place.

Remind yourself that if you never ask, you'll never know.



Be assertive

Assertiveness means expressing your point of view clearly and directly, while still respecting others. Communicating in an assertive manner can help you to minimize conflict.

Assertive style of communication, they may make culturally-appropriate eye contact, have a calm but firm voice and respect the rights of others without neglecting their own rights.



Communicating with authority

One of the biggest challenges peer workers face in their day-to-day work is communicating with figures of authority.

When communicating with figures of authority, keep the following tips in mind:

Focus on the person – not the power

Be aware of body language

Remain calm and composed

Avoid being defensive

Concentrate on the positive and what you have in common

Don't be afraid to be assertive