



# COMMUNICATION SKILLS\*

## ▶ ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

 **Time:** 55-60 minutes

 **Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the purposes and benefits of good communication.
- Describe a few skills that may be used to enhance communication with clients.

 **Training Methods:** Lecture, Large Group Discussion, Skills Practice

 **In This Activity You Will...**

- Lead two brief icebreakers (5-10 minutes).
- Provide lecturette combined with full group discussion on communication skills (20 minutes).
- Ask participants to pair up and practice using skills and giving each other feedback (30 minutes)

 **Materials:**

- Flipchart
- Markers
- Handout- Picture of Woman
- Handout - Cash Register Worksheet
- Handout - Communication Skills Worksheet
- Handout- Barbara's Case Study

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## Instructions

1. **Icebreaker #1-** Pass out picture of woman (Handout# 1) and ask participants what they see. Responses might vary from young girl looking sideways to old woman with big nose. The point of this activity is that everyone does not see the same thing, so communication is utterly important.

**Icebreaker #2-** Distribute to the participants “The Cash Register Worksheet” handout. Give them 4 minutes to complete in pairs. After everyone has completed it, tell them that the answers are: #3 false & #6 is true and rest of the answers are “don’t know”. Discuss with the group why they don’t know the rest. Point out that we make many assumptions if we have answered these questions. As humans, we have the tendency to want to fill in the blanks instead of asking questions to get the real deal and to get the correct information. This again shows that communication is an important skill to have as peers so we don’t make assumptions and get information wrong about our clients!

2. Now, begin this module on Communication Skills by explaining that the first concept or skill we need to know about is **Communication.**

3. What’s even more important than the information that we will be teaching our clients is how we communicate the information to them. Communication is sharing information by listening and giving feedback.

4. For good communication you need not only good information but you also need to use your:

- Eyes – see other’s facial expressions, make eye contact
- Ears – be attentive by concentrate on what is being said; Be impartial and don’t form an opinion, just listen.
- Mouth – reflect back, acknowledge the reaction that they are having and summarize what has been said.
- Mind- to soak it all in.
- Heart- Listen with sensitivity and compassion.

\* This module comes from the Lotus Women’s Peer Education Training Manual, Center for Health Training and Women Organized to Respond to Life Threatening Diseases (WORLD), 2008.

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## ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY (CONT.)

### Preparation:

- Make copies of handouts.
- Write the following skills and their definitions on flipchart paper. Power point can also be used:

### Communication Skills:

Affirming

Open ended questions

Active Listening

Nonverbal Messages

Express Thoughts and Feelings

Communicate Without Making Other  
Feel “Wrong”

- Go to the Case Study section of the Toolkit and print out copies of Barbara’s case study.

5. Refer to the handout on Communication Skills. Tell the group we’re going to look at 6 specific communication skills that we can use in any situation, with anyone.
6. As we go along, encourage the participants to complete their worksheet.
7. The first communication skill is **Affirming**.
8. *Ask: what does “affirming” mean?* Allow 1-2 responses.
9. Affirming is a positive confirmation. When you affirm something that someone has done or said, you are providing them with support and encouragement. This is unbelievably simple, yet most of us forget to do it!
10. *Ask: What are some examples of affirming statements?* Allow 3-4 responses and write on flipchart.
  - “That’s good.”
  - “I’m glad you asked that.”
  - “You’ve come to the right place.”
  - “That’s a great question.”
  - “You’re on the right track.”
  - “You really seem to have given this a lot of thought.”
11. The second skill is **Open-ended Questions**. *Ask: What’s an open-ended question?*
12. *Open-ended questions are questions that can’t be answered by “yes” or “no.” Why are they useful?* We get much more information from people; participants “own” the information they’re learning; powerful teaching tool.
13. *Ask: What are some examples of open-ended questions that you would use when getting to know someone and where they come from?* As participants come up with questions, if they ask a closed question, simply answer “yes” or “no” and move on.

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14. When they come up with open-ended questions, write the *first word* on flipchart, until you have the following list:
- When
  - Where
  - How
  - Who
  - Why
  - Tell me more ... also counts even though it's not really a question, it still gets more information.
15. Tell participants that these are all words that open-ended questions usually begin with.
16. What are some terms we should stay away from because they will give us yes or no responses and very little information?
- Could you
  - Would you
  - Should I
  - Can you
  - Do you
  - Are you
17. The next skill is **Active Listening**.
18. *What do you think it means to listen actively?* Using your eyes, ears, mouth, heart and body language to listen. This is especially important if someone is showing some strong feelings including feeling of sadness, shock, anger, relief, frustration, grief, etc.
19. *Ask: if a client is having one (ore more) of these feelings, how much do you think she can learn?* Not much at all. So what can we do to help her let go of these feelings, so that she can be more open?
20. *Tell the group: One thing that's really simple and really effective is to just name the feeling, by saying something like, "you seem \_\_\_\_\_ (upset/frustrated/sad)" etc.* By simply naming the feeling, it does help that person to let go and move on.
21. *Ask: Why does this work?* We let the person know its okay to have feelings; we give permission to express them and often to let them go, so she can hear the information she came to get.
22. *Ask: So why is it hard to actively listen?* We tend to want to "fix" it if someone is having uncomfortable feelings.
23. The next skill is **Nonverbal Messages**. *Ask: what are nonverbal messages?*
- Posture - let your body show that you are interested by sitting up and leaning toward the speaker.
  - Equal positioning - if the speaker is standing, you stand. If the speaker is sitting, you sit as well.
  - Facial expression - remember that feelings are reflected in facial expressions.
  - Gestures - your body language reveals a lot about how you interpret a message, so be aware of when you send signals that might cause the speaker to believe that you are angry, in a hurry, bored, etc.
24. It is also important to remember that different cultures have different styles of body language. For example in many cultures it is rude to give eye contact to someone who is older than you.

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25. The next skill is **Express Thoughts and Feelings**. *Ask: How do we do that?*

- Be open and honest – this will help build trust.
- Speak clearly - don't mumble and don't talk too quietly. If you don't know the word for something, describe what you mean so that you and the client can have a shared understanding of your concern or question.
- Make the distinction between facts, beliefs, and feelings. For example, which of the following statements are which?

“The best medical regimen for all clients is ...”  
(belief)

“I'm so pleased you've been taking your meds.”  
(feeling)

“Most PLWH experience ...” (fact)

26. The last skill is to **communicate without making other feel “Wrong”**. *How do we do this?*

- Express concerns non-judgmentally - talk about your questions or concerns without blaming other people. For example, you might be angry that your client stood you up three times in a row. Rather than talk about her being irresponsible, you can ask her what stopped her from showing up.
- Use “I” statements. Rather than say, “You didn't explain that very well,” say, “I didn't understand what you just said. Please explain it again.”

27. Now we are going to practice some of these skills.

28. Break up group into pairs. Using Barbara's case study as a skit, ask each pair to practice each of the following communication skills with your partner. One person is Barbara and one person is Sonya.

29. Barbara will talk to Sonya to get more information about her situation and how she might go about helping her. Give pairs 20 minutes. Ask them to switch roles 10 minutes into the exercise.

- Ask open ended questions.
- Respond with affirming statements.
- Active Listening- Reflect back what the person said.
- Nonverbal Messages
- Express Thoughts and Feelings
- Communicate without making the other feel wrong.

30. Sonya should give feedback to Barbara about her use of the communication skills. 5 minutes

31. Have the pairs report back on how easy or difficult it was to use the communication skills.

## Summary

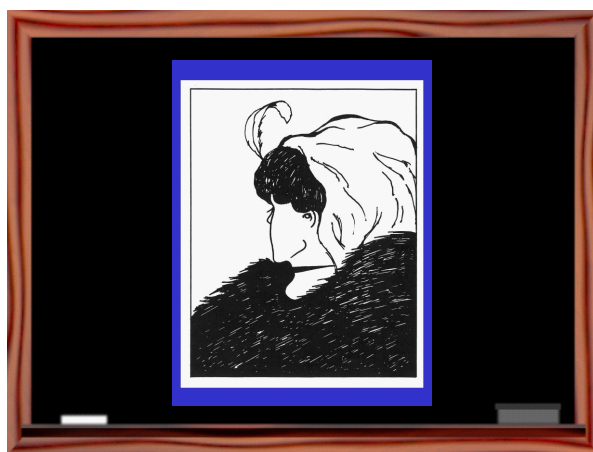
- Using these skills will feel artificial and awkward at first, but with practice, they come more easily.
- Practice, practice, practice! Practicing with children is great, since you're less likely to be self-conscious.

\* This module is part of the online toolkit Building Blocks to Peer Success. For more information, visit [http://www.hdwg.org/peer\\_center/training\\_toolkit](http://www.hdwg.org/peer_center/training_toolkit). This module comes from the Lotus Women's Peer Education Training Manual, Center for Health Training and Women Organized to Respond to Life Threatening Diseases (WORLD), 2008.

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## SESSION HANDOUT #1 of 3

### ICEBREAKER #1 PICTURE



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## SESSION HANDOUT #2 of 3

### CASH REGISTER WORKSHEET

#### The Story

A businessman has just turned off the lights in the store when a man appeared and demanded money. The owner opened a cash register. The contents of the cash register were scooped up, and the man sped away. A member of the police force was notified promptly.

#### Statements About the Story

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. A man appeared after the owner turned off his store lights.   | T | F | ? |
| 2. The robber was a man.   | T | F | ? |
| 3. The man did not demand money.   | T | F | ? |
| 4. The man who opened the cash register was the owner.   | T | F | ? |
| 5. The storeowner scooped up the contents of the cash register and sped away.  | T | F | ? |
| 6. Someone opened a cash register.   | T | F | ? |
| 7. After the man who demanded the money scooped up the contents of the cash register, he ran away.   | T | F | ? |
| 8. While the cash register contained money, the story does not state how much.   | T | F | ? |
| 9. The robber demanded money of the owner.   | T | F | ? |
| 10. The story concerns a series of events in which only three persons are referred to: the owner of the store, a man who demanded money, and a member of the police force. | T | F | ? |

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## SESSION HANDOUT #3 of 3

### COMMUNICATION SKILLS

SKILL	WHAT IS IT?	EXAMPLE
Affirming		
Open-Ended Questions		
Active Listening		
Nonverbal		
Express Thoughts and Feelings		
Communicate Without Making Others Feel “Wrong”		