

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES: EXPRESSING YOURSELF*

▶ ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

🕒 **Time:** 75 minutes

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

- Demonstrate principles of sharing information without giving advice.
- Differentiate between feelings statements and opinions/judgments.

★ **Training Methods:** Role Play, Large Group Discussion, Lecture

✓ **In This Activity You Will...**

- Perform a role play for participants demonstrating overly directive communication (5 minutes).
- Discuss giving advice versus giving information (30 minutes).
- Discuss examples of directive communication and identifying feelings and then practice (40 minutes).

✂ **Materials:**

- Handout - Expressing Yourself Role Play
- Handout - PLISSIT Model
- Handout - Giving Advice (flip chart and handout)
- Handout - Steps to Sharing Information (flipchart and handout)

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Instructions

1. Introduce session.
2. Conduct *Expressing Yourself* role play in front of class.
3. After the role play is finished, ask participants for feedback:
 - How effective was the counselor at addressing the client's concerns?

Counselor directed session, rather than following client's lead.

Counselor discussed what was concerning her/him, not what was most pressing for the client.

Client said she felt guilty, but counselor shut her down by saying she shouldn't feel that emotion.

- What attitude was the counselor expressing during the session?

That the counselor knew best how to deal with the client's issues.

- What words used by the counselor conveyed that attitude?

*You **shouldn't feel** guilty; you **can't** let things get out of control; you **need to** let her know who's boss; you **have to** establish authority.*

- How could the counselor have been more effective in addressing the client's concerns?

Let the client's concerns lead the discussion.

Listen to and explore client's feelings and options, rather than give advice.

Give client permission to experience her feelings.

* This module comes from the Comprehensive Peer Worker Training, Peer Advanced Competency Training (PACT) Project Harlem Hospital Center, Division of Infectious Diseases, 2008.

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ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY (CONT.)

Materials (cont.):

- Handout - Feelings vs. Opinions and Judgments (flipchart and handout)
- Handout - Expressing Feelings samples
- Handout - Expressive Humor
- Tape
- Flip chart and easel
- Markers
- Eraser

Preparation:

- Prepare Giving Advice list and Steps to Sharing Information on flip chart paper
- Prepare handouts

Listen more than talk; the session should be about the client's experiences and feelings, not the counselor's.

Don't minimize client's predicament by telling her that things are going to be alright

- In general, what do people want to hear when they talk to someone about something that is bothering them?
4. Introduce the PLISSIT Model, integrating participant feedback about the role play into the presentation.
 5. Summarize by emphasizing the importance of listening over speaking.
 6. Ask participants what advice sounds like -- what words are used when a person is giving advice?
 7. Write comments on flip chart.
 8. Compare participants' list with the *Giving Advice* list on flip chart.
 9. Present *Steps to Sharing Information* using flip chart.
 10. Remind participants that clients make their own decisions and we should present information to help them rather than suggestions/advice.
 11. Introduce the idea of examining one's feelings as a necessary part of communicating clearly.
 12. Ask participants why they think it is important to learn to express him or her self. Write their responses on flip chart.
 13. Ask participants how they know when they are expressing their feelings.

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES: EXPRESSING YOURSELF

► TRAINING TIP

- Emphasize what someone wants when s/he comes to see you.
- Where is the power when you give advice versus information?
- Implementing “I feel” statements is very hard in real life.

14. Demonstrate how using the word “feel” does not always represent a person’s feelings. Show how “feel” is often used to express opinions and judgments using *Feelings vs. Opinions and Judgments* on flip chart.
15. Explain that if “I think” can be substituted for “I feel” then it is not a feeling. Tell them to look for blame in the statement.
16. Ask participants if they have ever been told something that was expressed as an opinion but was actually a judgment.
17. Give examples of sneaky judgments that express an opinion.
18. Give *Expressing Feelings exam* to participants. Ask for a volunteer to read the first example and ask the group whether it is a sentence that expresses feelings or is a sneaky judgment. Discuss as a group. ***If the sentence does not reflect a feeling then ask participants to rephrase.*** Repeat for each example.

Summary

Wrap up and hand out *Expressive Humor* handout for a lighthearted look at expressing yourself.

* 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. This module comes from the Comprehensive Peer Worker Training, Peer Advanced Competency Training (PACT) Project Harlem Hospital Center, Division of Infectious Diseases, 2008.

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES: EXPRESSING YOURSELF

SESSION HANDOUT #1 of 7

EXPRESSING YOURSELF ROLE PLAY

(The client, Tina, has just entered her counselor's office for her weekly session.)

Counselor: Hi, Tina, how are you doing today?

Tina: OK, I guess.

Counselor: Listen, I think we should spend this session discussing your relationship with your daughter. I've noticed that it's a topic you've avoided in the past and I think it's time we dealt with it. How are things going between the two of you?

Tina: Well, things haven't been so great. I feel like she's angry with me for getting sick and I feel guilty because this is something I brought on myself, you know, because of shooting up. So now she goes out all the time with her friends 'til all hours of the morning and I don't feel like I can control her anymore.

Counselor: First of all, you shouldn't feel guilty – guilt is a wasted emotion. And you can't continue to let things get out of control with your daughter – you need to let her know who's boss. You know, when my son was a teenager, he started hanging out with the wrong crowd. I never knew where he was at night and then I found out he was ditching school. I knew I had to put my foot down fast or I might lose him to the streets. So I gave him a curfew, told him he had to get an after-school job, and said he had to get a B average at school this year – if he failed to meet any of those conditions, I told him I'd pack him off to his grandparents who don't tolerate any nonsense. I'm not going to say it was an easy road, but eventually I was able to get him back on the right path. If it worked for me, I'm sure it can work for you and your daughter.

Tina: I just don't know if it will work the same way with us -- I feel like I've lost all authority over her.

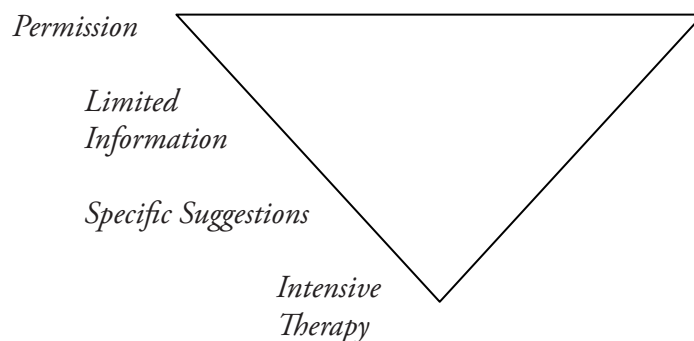
Counselor: You have to commit yourself to establishing authority or the situation will only get worse. If you do what I'm telling you, things will turn out alright.

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SESSION HANDOUT #2 of 7

THE PLISSIT MODEL

The PLISSIT Model is one which may be used by counselors to typify the needs of the client.



Permission

Most people want one thing, and one thing only: Permission. Permission to feel their feelings and to express them without being judged. They do **not** want:

- To be given advice or to be told what to do
- To hear how the counselor handled a similar problem
- To have the counselor read them a passage from a medical textbook
- To be told not to worry
- To be told that they shouldn't or should feel angry, confused, scared...

In fact, they don't want to hear much from the counselor at all: counseling is primarily about listening, not talking.

Limited Information

Fewer people ask for information. Limited information means that the conversation is directed by the client and his or her need for information, rather than being governed by the counselor's and proceed to other, often-difficult questions.

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SESSION HANDOUT #2 of 7 (cont.)

THE PLISSIT MODEL (CONT.)

Specific Suggestions

Still fewer people need specific suggestions. Suggestions are not the same as advice: although suggestions may come out of the counselor's personal and professional experience, the suggestions themselves are tailored to the individual client's needs rather than the needs of the counselor. Suggestions are almost always questions ("Could you..?" "Would it work if you..?") and specific suggestions break down in proposed action into workable parts (to visit a doctor a person may need to ask for the afternoon off from the boss, negotiate the absence with co-workers, figure out which subway to ride, etc.)

Intensive Therapy

Some people need intensive therapy, which is beyond the scope of this work. When the client's concerns cannot be effectively addressed in a brief conversation, counselors may ask the client what his or her feelings are about therapy and may refer the client to a qualified therapist.

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SESSION HANDOUT #3 of 7

GIVING ADVICE

“You should...”

“You ought to...”

“Why don’t you....”

“You should have...”

“Why didn’t you....”

“You shouldn’t have...”

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SESSION HANDOUT #4 of 7

STEPS TO SHARING INFORMATION

Offering Information

Deciding How Much Information to Offer

Making Suggestions

Discussing Options

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SESSION HANDOUT #5 of 7

FEELINGS VS. OPINIONS AND JUDGMENTS

Expressing a feeling:

“I feel...”

Expressing an opinion or judgment:

“I feel that...”

“I feel like...”

“I feel I/you/he/she/it...”

If you can replace “I feel” with “I think” then it is an opinion!

Examples:

I feel stressed when I come home and I find dirty dishes in the sink from the morning.

I feel pressured when I don't have time to think about my schedule before you make plans for our weekend.

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SESSION HANDOUT #6 of 7

EXPRESSING FEELINGS SAMPLES

1. I was really hurt that you didn't come to Jan's baby shower.
2. I feel you gave me a bad evaluation without spending time looking at my work
3. I am really ticked off that you are cross-talking with your friends during the group.
4. (To your teenager) I'm feeling really exhausted and cranky after a long day, and I wonder if we could talk about raising your allowance after dinner.
5. I feel taken advantage of when I end up paying for our lunches because you don't bring cash.
6. (To your co-worker) I'm frustrated and angry that you left the supply cabinet unlocked again and the VCR is missing.

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SESSION HANDOUT #7 of 7

EXPRESSIVE HUMOR

These are actual quotes from insurance company accident reports:

“An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my vehicle, and vanished.”

“I was on the way to the doctor with rear-end trouble when my universal joint gave way, causing me to have an accident.”

“The pedestrian had no idea which direction to go, so I ran over him.”

“I collided with a stationary (sic) truck coming the other way.”

“I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment.”

“I had been driving my car for 40 years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident.”

“I thought my window was down, but I found out it was up when I put my hand through it.”

“My car was legally parked as it backed into the other vehicle.”

“In my attempt to kill a fly, I drove into a telephone pole.”