Communication Skills

Communication tends to serve one of two purposes

1. Venting (sharing feelings)
2. Problem-solving

General Communication Skills

- Small smiles, nodding and acknowledging using words such as “aha” “go on”.
- Eye contact shows you are engaged and within your window of tolerance. However, it can be intimidating, gauge how much eye contact is appropriate.
- Mirror and match mannerisms and speech appropriately to create and maintain rapport subconsciously. Watch your speech pattern, slow it down if you or they are speaking too quickly.
- De-escalation - Sit down, even if person is standing. Move alongside person, or angle body towards them rather than facing directly.
- Empathy drives connection VS Sympathy drives disconnection
    - Perspective taking
    - No judgment
    - Recognizing emotions
    - Communicating you see their emotion
    - Using the words “I’m sorry you feel that way” - lacks empathy
- Take a time out if cool off time is needed
- Don’t come with just the issue, come with several solutions
- Validate feelings
- Use words such as “I notice _____” or “I feel _____”

Listening Skills

- Listen to understand
- Non-judgementally, helps the person feel heard and understood, without judgement
- Ask questions that show you genuinely care and are interested in what they are saying. For example: “you mentioned” “Can you tell me more about that” OR
- Use the acronym WAIT – Why Am I Talking

Signs you are not Listening

- You say you understand when they are not making sense
- You have an answer to the problem before they finish telling you the problem
- Cut them off or finish their sentences
- Tell them about your experiences making theirs seem unimportant
- Refuse their thanks by saying you haven’t done anything

Speaker - Listener Technique

- Listener trying to convey understanding after the speaker makes an “I statement” in the following form
- When _____ happens, I feel _____. I would like _____ .

Communication Skills

Language & Non-Verbal Language

- Listening to what they are not saying but how they are saying it. Example, language used and tone of voice
- Body language. What is your or their posture telling you. Positive posture - slight lean forward or when sitting, slight slant of head.
- Maintain open body position. Don't cross arms over body.
- Be patient, they may not be communicating well, repetitive or speaking slower. Resist the urge to finish their sentences
- Pauses and silence is ok…
- Maintain eye contact… check in, is it appropriate
- Avoid distracting gestures (fidgeting with pen, glancing at other things or tapping your feet or fingers, they could think you're not interested)
- Watch your emotional response. Be aware of reactions vs responding.

Be Clear

- Be specific
- Share thoughts and feelings
- Pay attention
- Ask clarifying questions
- Summarize content and feelings

Be Considerate

- Include positives
- Show consideration when expressing negatives
- Let partner know that you are listening even if you disagree
- No-judgement

Important To Consider Before Approaching

- Define the problem
- Maintaining a civil tone of voice
- Don't interrupt
- Be flexible

Request for change

- Specific
    - Identify what you are wanting out of the discussion. What they are demonstrating.
    - Identify times that are conducive to discussing/problem solving and times that are not.
- Observable. How will you know change is happening.
- Ask for increases in positive behaviours rather than decreases in negative behaviours