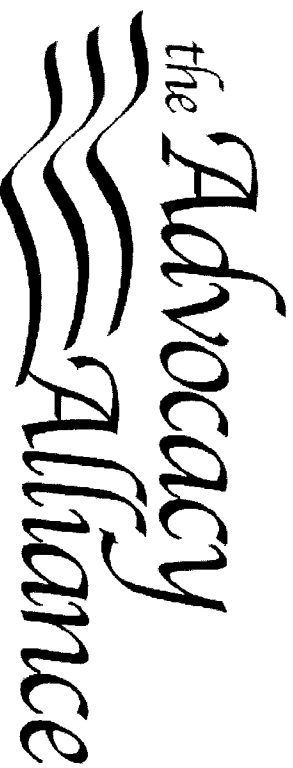


Communicating with the Nonverbal Individual



Health Care Quality Units

Disclaimer

- The information presented to you today is intended to increase your understanding of communicating with nonverbal individuals.
- The information is not intended to replace medical advice.
- If you are in need of medical advice, please contact your physician.

Objectives

- The participant will learn:
 1. What is involved in effective interpersonal communication.
 2. The particular challenges that exist for an individual whose communication is primarily nonverbal.
 3. Strategies to better support those individuals.

What Do We Communicate?

- Wants and needs
- Ideas
- Directions
- Opinions
- Explanations
- Feelings
- Rationalizations
- Actions
- Social information

Interpersonal Communications

- Direct Channels
 - Often obvious and easily recognized by the receiver.
 - Verbal-spoken and written word.
 - Nonverbal-facial expression, controlled body movements, color, sound.
- Indirect Channels
 - Usually recognized subconsciously by the receiver, not always under control of the sender.
 - Body language.
 - Reflects true emotions.
 - “Gut-Feeling” .
- Context
 - Conditions that precede or surround communication.

Communicating with Nonverbal Individuals

- Delayed or absent development of language is a common symptom of many individuals diagnosed with a developmental disability.

Communicating with Nonverbal Individuals

- Nonverbal individuals may not communicate with speech BUT can use alternative methods such as:
 - Noises.
 - Gestures.
 - Picture boards.
 - Devices.

Understanding the Nonverbal Individual

- **Every behavior is a communication.**
 - Body language can tell a lot about what an individual is feeling.
 - Nonverbal communication is learned and practiced often on an unconscious level.
 - There is not a nonverbal individual who does not communicate.

Unlocking Communication

- **Assessment:**
 - Assess the developmental level and skills of the individual.
 - Observe the style of communication and keep a log.
 - Learn the individual's behaviors and what message is communicated.
 - Always consider pain and physical health needs *first* with ANY behavior.

Behavior Examples

- Headache
- Fever
- Stomach Ache
- Toothache, sore mouth
- Pain.....
- Head banging
- Lethargy, refuses to eat
- Refuses food
- Holds face, can't chew
- Refuses to sit, bathe, or lay still

Nonverbal Communication

- Eye contact
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Posture
- Spatial relations

Communication Plan

- Based on the assessment, develop a plan.
- List the behavior and what it means.
- List results from the specific communication techniques.
- Address any possible physical issues.
- Offer a choice of solutions.

Communication Plan

- Questions to ask:
 - Did I ask the question in an understanding way for this particular individual?
 - Did I communicate quickly and accurately to avoid frustration?
 - Was I willing to wait patiently for a response?

Open -Ended Questions

- Ask questions that are open-ended to encourage the individual to express his/her feelings:
 - What...?
 - Could...?
 - Would...?

Listening

- Listening is the most important form of communication.
- It is a difficult means of communication to practice.
- Learn to hear what is being said rather than planning on what you are going to say in response.

Communication is Dependent on our Environment

- It is not understood how much our environment influences us: it is something to consider.
- We must be able to understand the context of our own communication.
- Spoken language frees us from having to use the context of environment to communicate.
- Non-verbal individuals are even more dependent on the context of their environment.

Communication and Context

- Physical milieu: the season or weather, current physical location, and environment.
- Situational milieu: classroom, military conflict, or supermarket checkout.
- Cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Developmental progress (maturity) or emotional state.
- Complementary or contrasting roles: boss and employee; teacher and student; parent, child, and spouse; friend or enemy; and partner or competitor.

Communication with Actions

- Most of us want to withdraw our attention from behaviors that are repulsive, annoying, or repetitive.
- Interventions need to show that we care rather than interpret all nonverbal communications as behaviors.
- It is difficult for someone to feel you care if he or she thinks you cannot understand him/her.

Communication with Actions

- There is a verbal communication technique called “fogging”.
- It is the tactic of repeating your communication verbally until you get an answer.
- Perhaps some of the behaviors we see in nonverbal individuals are cases of “fogging”.
- Individuals use repetitive behaviors to get a point across until we understand what they want or need.

5 Guidelines that Make a Difference

1. Establish an environment (context) where interactions consistently demonstrate acceptance and respect.
2. Communicate with a caring and honest attitude.
3. Obtain information about the individual such as history, challenges, fears, interests, and dreams.
4. Use what you learn to ease his/her communication struggles.
5. Communicate with staff members what you have learned.

Ultimate Goals

- Goals might include:
 - Helping individuals to be less anxious in social settings.
 - Reduce anxiety or depression when dealing with physical or medical problems.
 - Help individuals gain control over their lives, replacing ways of living that do not work well with ways of living that do work.

Congratulations

You are now ready to take the post-test.

Once you have submitted the post-test and evaluation, you can print your certificate. Just make sure all information is entered correctly so you can receive your certificate.

References

Nonverbal Communication Abstracts

www.faculty.ucr.edu/~friedman/nvcabstract.html

Nonverbal Communication Issues

www.coping.org/dialogue/nonverbal.html