



Health Workforce Initiative

Hi-Touch Healthcare: The Critical Six Soft Skills

Grab-N-Go Independent Training Module:

Small Group

HEALTH WORKFORCE INITIATIVE STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, CALIFORNIA
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Small Group Communication Skills

Grab-N-Go Independent Training Module

Competency Domain: Communication

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Small Group Communication Skills

Competency Domain: Communication “GRAB-N-GO” Independent Training Module

Background Information

Small group communication is becoming a vitally important component of patient-centered care as the demand for inter-professional collaborative practice grows. The growing demand for collaborative training is a result of research that demonstrates the benefits to patient care due to knowledge sharing and coordinated efforts among healthcare professionals. Effective collaborative practice occurs when healthcare workers from diverse backgrounds successfully work together to optimize patient care leading to improved patient outcomes: reduced errors, costs and workloads; enhanced provider satisfaction; increased job satisfaction and staff retention; and, improved utilization of resources.ⁱ

The key to successful collaborative practice and integrated health care is efficient and effective small group communication particularly when “timely and pertinent information exchanges between different healthcare professionals are critical to safe patient care.”ⁱⁱ At the core of effective group communication is the ability for members to disseminate information about the desired outcomes and to take joint responsibility for the group’s performance through the use of supportive communication patterns. Supportive communication patterns facilitate the



development of efficient and effective small group communication through enhanced trust and respect, the creation and negotiation of responsibilities, and “a cohesive and complementary set of services for the benefit of the patients and the team members.”ⁱⁱⁱ Therefore, to ensure quality patient-centered care and effective working relationships, all healthcare members, regardless of job function or title, must actively engage in supportive communication patterns. As such, this module focuses on six supportive communication patterns that should be actively used to improve team communication. The module also presents six defensive communication patterns that should be avoided.^{iv}



Training

How to Engage In Supportive Communication



Goal: Participants will learn how supportive communication patterns help to create and negotiate responsibilities by building trust and respect.

WIIFM: What's in it for me? Because health care employees encounter and work with people of all ages, backgrounds, and various levels of health and distress, using supportive communication in the delivery of health care is vitally important.

This module helps participants understand the importance of using supportive communication to foster an inter-professional collaborative work environment. While many people may employ the use of supportive communication, everyone can benefit from a refresher course in this area (discuss when displaying slide 4).

Supportive communication fosters effective collaborative practices and occurs when healthcare workers from diverse backgrounds successfully work together to

- Optimize patient care leading to improved patient outcomes.
- Reduce errors, costs and workloads.
- Enhance provider satisfaction.
- Increase job satisfaction and staff retention.
- Improve utilization of resources.

(Byrnes, et al., 2012; American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2015)



Materials Provided:

1. This Small Group PowerPoint (45 – 60 minutes)
2. Activity #1: Night Nurse and Day Nurse Role Playing (10-15 minutes)
3. Activity #2: Using “I” Language (15-20 minutes)
4. Case Studies: Small Group Communication (10-15 minutes)
5. “Defensive and Supportive Communication Patterns” handout



Directions for the Trainer: Activity preparation information is included in this document and/or within the PowerPoint presentation notes. Each PowerPoint slide, as appropriate, includes detailed explanations and instructions for the trainer. As with all Grab-N-Go Modules, you can use it all for a more detailed training, or simply use one or two of the many Activities—A la Carte style!



ACTIVITY #1

Role Playing

Night Nurse and Day Nurse Role Playing Activity Instructions



Goal: To demonstrate how defensive communication patterns undermine effective team communication and to illustrate that defensive communication engenders defensive listening which, if unmonitored, can lead to circular defensive responses. As a result, each party wastes time and energy by defending themselves rather than addressing and resolving the problem at hand.



Materials:

- A copy of the “Night Nurse and Day Nurse Role Playing Activity” instructions
- PowerPoint Slide #6

Planning Note:

Print the role playing instructions on page (p. 7). Print one page for every two people and cut each page in half, making two sets of instructions. Separate the pages into two sets (Partner 1 and Partner 2).



ACTIVITY #1

Role Playing



Procedures:

- Announce that this is a role playing activity and then provide the following directions:
 - Pair off. Explain that each person will be provided with instructions describing his or her role.
 - Distribute the printed instructions to each pair making sure that one person has instructions for Partner 1 and the other person has instructions for Partner 2. Instruct the participants that they are **not** to show their instructions to their partners. Explain that the pairs will have three minutes to complete the task.
 - Instruct the pairs to begin.
 - After three minutes, ask the partners to review their comments with one another and to note how many times each person used the word “you.”
 - Give the participants an additional three minutes to repeat the activity while trying to avoid using the word “you.”
 - Reflect: after the partners have shared their experiences of the activity with each other, bring the whole group together and ask questions such as:
 - How many times was the word “you” used?
 - Why was it difficult to restructure comments to avoid the word “you”?
 - How did you feel during this activity?
 - What behaviors did you observe that made you feel defensive (or may cause a person to feel defensive)?
 - Did you feel you were being understood? Why or why not?
 - What was it like for you in your role?
- Explain that during the rest of the workshop the various forms of defensive communication patterns will be explained with instructions on how to replace defensive patterns with supportive patterns of communication.
- If there is not enough time to review all of the defensive and supportive communication patterns, use PowerPoint slides seven through nine to accompany this case study.



ACTIVITY #1

Role Playing

Night Nurse and Day Nurse Role Playing Activity

Partner 1: Imagine that you are a day-shift nurse who has been following the same night-shift nurse for the past several weeks. Each time you come to work, you feel over-burdened with the tasks that have been left over from the previous shift. You believe that the night-shift nurse does not know how to prioritize key tasks properly. You are becoming upset because you think the duties of the day shift are more demanding than those of the night shift. Specifically, you are upset because the night shift differential is \$6 more per hour. When you come to work you have to change the linens, complete unfilled doctor's orders, restock supplies, and complete 24-hour order checks.

You believe these tasks should have been completed on the night-shift and that carrying out these tasks puts you behind schedule and prevents you from working more closely with your patients. Because you have not seen any improvement in the situation, you feel it is time to confront the night-nurse. Pretend that your partner is the night-shift nurse and explain to him/her what changes you would like to see happen to make your workload more manageable. Do not reveal your instructions to your partner.

Partner 2: Listen to what your partner has to say. After your partner finishes, respond by explaining that you disagree with the assessment of the situation. In fact, you believe that you are the one who should be upset because the night shift is frequently seen as an easier shift and you are annoyed that people do not respect the night shift. Furthermore, you are frustrated that the day shift does not ask questions about your workload, but rather assumes they know what the shift entails. What the day shift does not realize is that the night shift has less support staff and many additional responsibilities including transfers, Crash Cart checks, and ACCU check verifications. Furthermore, contrary to popular belief – patients do not sleep through the night and require a lot of attention. Do not reveal your instructions to your partner



ACTIVITY #2

Using “I” Language



Goal: To demonstrate that replacing a defensive communication pattern with supportive communication leads to more effective working relationships.



Materials Needed

- “Defensive and Supportive Communication Patterns” handout
- PowerPoint Slide #20



Procedures:

Have participants think about or imagine a problematic situation.

- Ask participants to write their own “you” statement for this problematic situation (slide 20).
- Explain that some “I” statements are really disguised “you” statements (slide 20).
- Explain the importance of learning how to effectively use “I” language (slide 21).
- Distribute the “Defensive and Supportive Communication Patterns” handout (page 9) and ask the participants to identify which defensive pattern most closely represents the “you” statement previously written (slide 20).
- Review the WIIFM (slide 21).
- Review the example of an “I” statement and a “you” statement (slide 23).
- Walk participants through how to write an effective “I” statement (slide 24).
- Divide the participants into groups of 3 and ask them to work together to transform their “you” statements into “I” statements.

Instruct the groups to:

- reflect on the reactions they might expect from their “you” statements
- discuss the importance of “I” statements
- develop a plan for practicing a shift from “you” statements to more “I” statements
- Lead a Large Group Report Out discussion and plan for practice (slide 25)



DEFENSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION PATTERNS handout

Defensive Communication Patterns	Supportive Communication Patterns
<p>Evaluation—Judging the other person; indicating disapproval by words or tone of voice: “That’s a pretty dumb idea!”</p>	<p>Description—Desiring to understand the other’s point of view without making the other person wrong: “Tell me more about how your idea would work.”</p>
<p>Control—Trying to dominate or change the other person; insisting on having things your way: “I want to do it this way, so that’s what we are going to do.”</p>	<p>Problem Orientation—Trying to search honestly for the best solution without having a predetermined idea of what the solution should be: “What ideas do you all have about how we might solve this?”</p>
<p>Manipulation—Trying to manipulate the other person or using deceit to achieve personal goals/agenda: “Don’t you think that it would be better if we did it this way?”</p>	<p>Assertiveness—Reacting honestly, openly, and freely: “I really like that, and here’s something else we could do...”</p>
<p>Indifference—Not caring about how the other group members feel: “We don’t have time to hear about your car accident right now; we have work to do.”</p>	<p>Empathy—Showing by your words and actions that you care about the other group members: “You had a car accident on the way here? Are you Ok? Is there anything we can do to help?”</p>
<p>Superiority—Maximizing status differences; pulling rank on other members with title, wealth, expertise, and so on: “Well, I’m chair of the committee, and I believe I make the final decision about how we do this.”</p>	<p>Equality—Minimizing status differences; treating every member of the group as an equally valued contributor: “I know I’m the chair, but the solution belongs to the whole committee, so don’t give my ideas any more weight than anyone else’s.”</p>
<p>Certainty—Being a know-it-all; acting positive that your way or belief is the only correct one: “I know exactly what we ought to do here, so I’ll take care of it.”</p>	<p>Provisionalism—Being tentative in expressing your opinions; being open to considering others’ suggestions fairly: “I have an idea I think might work...”</p>

(Adams and Galanes, 2015; Rothwell, 2013)



Case Studies - Small Group Communication



Case Study # 1 –

Katie and Todd are respiratory therapists who work at a local hospital doing twelve hour shifts. Todd works the day shift and Katie works the night shift. For several weeks they have been disagreeing about their workload. Katie believes that Todd doesn't get enough done during his shift, leaving a large workload for Katie. Todd continues to tell Katie "You have no idea how busy it is on days; I can't get everything done in the time I am working."

They are both attending a monthly staff meeting, and the Director of Respiratory Therapy is engaging her staff in conversation about any issues they would like to discuss. Katie raises her hand and says "Todd, it's not fair that you don't get your work done during days and I am stuck with picking up the pieces on the night shift because of your lack of work ethic." Todd stands up and says "I am sick and tired of your attitude; you have no idea what it's like for the day shift. Why don't you just leave me alone or find another job!"

The director stops them both and says "Katie, Todd, let's take a break for a few minutes. I would like you to meet me in my office first thing tomorrow morning to discuss this matter further."

Questions for thought:

What impact did "you" language have on the situation?

How could Katie have used more supportive communication when she talked about her frustrations with Todd? How could she have avoided the use of "you" language?

Was the staff meeting an appropriate venue to bring up her frustrations? Why or why not?

How could Todd have used more supportive communication during the staff meeting?

Did the director handle the situation well? Was there anything more she could have said during the staff meeting that would have been more effective?



References

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- ⁱⁱ Lo, V., Wu, R. C., Morra, D., Lee, L., & Reeves, S. (2012). The use of smartphones in general and internal medicine units: A boon or a bane to the promotion of interprofessional collaboration? *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 26(4), 276-282. doi:10.3109/13561820.2012.663013
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