



Health Workforce Initiative

Hi-Touch Healthcare: The Critical Six Soft Skills

Grab-N-Go Independent Training Module:

Adaptability and Flexibility

HEALTH WORKFORCE INITIATIVE STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, CALIFORNIA
COMMUNITY COLLEGES CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



Adaptability and Flexibility

Grab-N-Go Independent Training Module

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Adaptability and Flexibility

Background Information

Quality patient care and practitioner well-being are impacted by rampant changes in healthcare. “The key role of healthcare leaders is to create and sustain an organizational environment that optimizes high quality, safe and effective patient-centered care.”ⁱ Thus, leaders seek to address gaps in patient care and introduce external influences and emerging trends such as interprofessional collaborations, culture-change models, virtual teams, and systems thinking.ⁱⁱ Tensions exist to facilitate change as human capital is constrained and strained: the number of primary care professionals is in declineⁱⁱⁱ and patient demand is on the rise.^{iv} Yet, there is no choice between change and no change.^v

“While all changes do not lead to improvement, all improvement requires change.”^{vi} The effects of disruptive change lead to distress, stress, and burnout.^{vii} “Managing change is about handling the complexity of the process. It is about evaluating, planning and implementing operations, tactics and strategies and making sure that the change is worthwhile and relevant.”^{viii} Successful implementation requires a balance among the degree of change, the rate of change, and the desirability of change.^{ix}

Employee resilience is an essential element in adapting to an ever –changing healthcare environment where “decisions are important and often urgent and the stakes of communication, teamwork and decision making are often very high.”^x



Communication is key to patient safety^{xi} and Bylund, et. al, (2012) makes the case that “[b]y its very nature, the provider-patient encounter *is* interpersonal communication.”^{xii} Communication is also key to effective change management processes.^{xiii}

Therefore, this training module will enhance participant’s flexibility and adaptability through a focus on foundational knowledge and skill building activities in three interpersonal communication competencies: cognitive complexity, adaptability, and self-awareness.^{xiv}



Training



Overall Goal: Participants will increase communication competency in the areas of self-awareness, adaptability, and cognitive complexity. The knowledge and skills in these areas serve to regulate personal behaviors related to both flexibility and adaptability.

WIIFM: What’s in it for me? Given the inevitability of change, either disruptive or productive, healthcare employees must “thrive or dive.” They can “thrive” by utilizing flexibility and adaptability skills or they can “dive” due to rigid attitudes that quickly result in stress-related conditions including burnout, illness, and loss of work.^{xv}



Materials Provided:

1. Adaptability and Flexibility PowerPoint
2. Activity #1: Finger-Focus
3. Activity #2: Impromptu Speaking
4. Impromptu Speech example
5. Activity #3: Moral Dilemma
6. Activity #4: Write & Respond: Case Study
7. Activity #5: Self-Monitor
8. “Self-Monitoring Assessment” worksheet



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 Procedures 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

Finger-Focus



Goal: This activity provides participants with the opportunity to experience muscle memory as a metaphor for flexibility.



Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint slide #6



Procedures:

- Tell participants to stand up and keep their arms at their sides. (*Adaptation is to place their hands on their laps while sitting.*)
- Reveal the image on PowerPoint slide #6
- Now tell them to intertwine fingers from both hands as they naturally do. Demonstrate this action at the same time.
 - Call on several participants and ask if the gesture feels natural.
- Tell them to unclasp their hands and shake out their arms and return to a resting position.
- Tell them to intertwine fingers from both hands again.
 - **This time tell them to put the opposite-hand finger on top.**
 - **Explain:** If the left hand index finger held the top position when intertwined previously, make the right hand index finger the top position. Demonstrate this by first intertwining your fingers naturally and then in the “un-natural” state several times.
 - Observe that some will demonstrate awkwardness with this task difference. And a few will have easy dexterity. This mirrors flexibility and adaptation in the workplace.
- Lead a discussion on how this activity is a metaphor for flexibility and change in the workplace with question prompts such as:
 - How did it feel to clasp hands in the un-natural state?
 - Who was able to do so without feeling uncomfortable? Why is that?



ACTIVITY #1

Finger-Focus

- How does this activity relate to what is happening in healthcare today?
- Conclude with a large group visualization exercise:
 - Ask participants to sit in a comfortable position. Now ask them to close their eyes and think about a recent experience when their flexibility was called for in a workplace situation.
 - How did their behavior in that situation take shape?
 - Were they agreeable and flexible and able to produce a positive outcome?
 - Ask them to reflect on their behavior in that situation and using the Finger Focus Activity “feelings” to determine if they were comfortable or uncomfortable with their own ability to be flexible.



ACTIVITY #2

Stress for Success: Impromptu Speaking



Goal: This activity is designed to induce stress among participants and also help develop impromptu speaking skills.



Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint slides 10-12
- 3x5 or 4x6 white index card for each participant
- Pen/pencil for each participant
- Timer
- (Optional: topic sheets and a hat or box from which to randomly remove topic sheets.)

(Trainer preparation for optional: Prepare topic sheets by typing a list of impromptu topics and then cutting the paper so that each topic is an independent slip of paper. Think a little bigger than a fortune cookie. Topic ideas are at the end of this document).



Procedures:

(Note to Trainer: these directions are intentionally designed to create stress but do not reveal this intention to participants.)

- Begin by reviewing PowerPoint slide #10 which introduces the activity. (Transition to the next slide and continue.)
- Explain that everyone **must, at a minimum**, write an impromptu speech and that *you* will randomly select people to speak. Emphasize that you will call on participants and not by volunteer. This increases the stress-level in the room.
- Hand each participant an index card. Explain that they can only write on one side and they will only have two minutes to complete the task.
- Some people will grumble, so explain it's a guide to jot down key words. Two MINUTES is not enough time to write out everything.
- Display the details on the PowerPoint slide and review the process for writing an impromptu speech. When done, ask participants to write down the basic outline on their index cards.
- Next, tell them you are about to display three topics and that they are to choose just one topic for their impromptu speech. They will write the speech on their cards.



ACTIVITY #2

Stress for Success: Impromptu Speaking

- Before you begin the timed portion of the activity, give them a moment to reflect on recent books they've read, movies they've seen, and stories they've heard. Explain that these will be the "support" for explaining their points.
- Remind them that they will have two minutes to write the speech and when delivered, the speech should be about 3 – 4 minutes long.
- Explain that you will give them time signals at one-minute remaining, 30 seconds remaining, 10 seconds and then 5-4-3-2-1. Done or not, everyone puts down the pen and turns over their cards.
- (Transition to the next PowerPoint slide #12.)
- Reveal the topics. (Option: pull topics from hat.) Announce that they can begin writing their speeches and start the timer. Remember to call out the time as it counts down. (**This intentionally adds stress**).
- At the end of two-minutes, call time and ask participants to stop writing.
- If time allows, randomly call on participants to come forward to deliver their speeches.
- After speeches have been delivered, ask for participants to draw a horizontal line on the unused side of the index card and using a Likert scale (0 – 5) indicate how "stressed" they felt during the activity. (0 is not at all and 5 is extremely stressed.)
- Afterwards, ask for volunteers to share how they felt during the timed activity and to what degree their stress level was.
- Lead a large group discussion about how we all feel and manifest anxiety differently. Thus, a new job task might cause one person no discomfort at all but another person might be very anxious.
 - How might this difference impact peer-to-peer relationships?
 - What does this mean in terms of adaptability and flexibility?
 - How might patients feel compared to healthcare professionals in the same situation? Who should be more flexible? Why?
- Conclude and summarize that when one is stressed, such as when in pain, concerned about a loved one, or feeling some interpersonal angst like being yelled at by a peer or co-worker, our bodies react. This activity was designed to generate a little stress as a reminder about why we need to demonstrate flexibility in how we react to urgencies sprung upon us and how we respond to those around us who might be dealing differently with an issue than we are.

Impromptu topics can be quotations, single words, images, products or ideas.



ACTIVITY #2

Stress for Success: Impromptu Speaking

Impromptu Speech Example

TOPIC: “Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change.” --Stephen Hawking

Introduction

1. Attention getter that relates to topic: **In the classic film, Star Wars, we meet iconic figure Yoda and hear him say, “Do or do not there is not try.” I think this was his way of making the same case that Stephen Hawking does when he says:**
2. Say/read the topic: **“Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change”**
3. Agree or disagree with the topic: **I agree with this quotation for two main reasons:**
4. Preview 2 reasons in support of your view: **1) The change of communication due to social media and 2) the increase in life expectancy due to medical advances.**

Body

1. Point one explanation with support then transition to pt. 2: **The change of communication due to social media has opened up interpersonal opportunities and global opportunities. I recently read a Pew Research study that shows a huge increase in adult access to smart phones. It’s true for me. I can now text my sweetie to see when I should have dinner ready and I can Face Time with my mom in China. Both of these illustrations depict an adaptability to change that improves relationships and that seems intelligent to me.**
2. Point two explanation with support then transition to conclusion: **Not too long ago, we thought pace makers were amazing but now the field of robotic medicine is broadening opportunity. Imagine the implications for saving lives from a distance such as being in New York and yet operated on by a doctor in Los Angles thanks to inventions like “robo-doc.” Artificial intelligence might be next but it’s still intelligence.**



ACTIVITY #2

Stress for Success: Impromptu Speaking

Conclusion

1. Review the preview of two points: **Today we looked at adaptability to change from two points: Social media and medical advances.**
2. Return to the topic and end with a note of finality: **Stephen Hawking and Yoda are right about the link between intelligence and adaptability to change. The future demands new ways of seeing the world around us.**



ACTIVITY #3

Moral Dilemma



Goal: This activity gives participants the opportunity to experience cognitive complexity in decision-making.



Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint Slide #13



Procedure:

- Display the Moral Dilemma on PowerPoint slide #13 and read it out loud.
- After a few minutes, ask for responses and observe how many chose which answer.
- By show of hands how many of you think the answer is:
 - The elderly woman who looks as if she is about to die.
 - The old friend who once saved your life.
 - The perfect partner you have been dreaming about.
- Invite participants to share why they believe one is correct over another.
 - Share the answer: Give the car to the old friend to drive the elderly woman to the hospital and stay behind with the perfect partner.

(Transition to PowerPoint slide #14.)

- Conclude the activity by introducing the concept of cognitive complexity in the healthcare organization.
- Explain that “cognitive complexity is the ability to consider a variety of explanations and to understand a given situation in multiple ways.”^{xvi} This principle is important in the delivery of quality patient care at every level of the organization. Theoretical models from outside healthcare, such as systems thinking, are being introduced as leadership attempts to reduce medical errors.^{xvii} Diversity in the healthcare environment requires new methods of interchange due to the culturally complex 21st century landscape.^{xviii} Interprofessional collaboration, technology integration,^{xix} and existing and emerging practices such as RN stacking involve high-level thinking and decision making.^{xx} At the same time, these varied and integrated components to delivery of quality health care are exacerbated by a shortage of nurse leaders, and traditional recruitment strategies are falling short.^{xxi} All of these driving forces of change in healthcare require cognitive complexity within our interpersonal communication practices.



ACTIVITY #4

Write & Respond: Case Study



Goal: To provide participants with an opportunity to engage in self-awareness and cognitive complexity by thinking in terms of the social penetration theory of communication disclosure.



Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint Slide #20



Procedures:

- First review PowerPoint slides 15 to 20 to provide an overview of social penetration theory.
- Divide the participants into groups of two to three people depending upon the number of participants (a minimum of three groups works best).
- Instruct the groups to write a brief case study they have experienced (5 – 10 minutes) at a time when sharing personal information rewards did not outweigh the costs and/or at a time when barriers to self-disclosure negatively constrained the situation.
 - Be clear that the case studies should not use anyone's real name or titles.
 - It can be a hypothetical example.
 - Ask that the writing be readable.
- Collect the case studies and distribute one case study, face down, to each (do not allow groups to work on their own case studies.)
- Ask each group to write down their notes and to be prepared to share their thoughts and ideas for more effective communication, given what they know about social penetration theory.
- Report Out: Ask each group to read the case study out loud and to share in detail how they addressed each of the situations and what courses of action might be taken to improve the communication outcome.
- Lead a large group discussion by asking the following questions:
 - Did you identify peer-to-peer issues and/or patient-practitioner issues that you might not have considered without this theory approach?
 - What implications does this new framework have for your personal flexibility with communication?
 - How can social penetration theory be applied in your workplace? What kinds of work-flow or organizational adaptations might be made to improve communication outcomes?



ACTIVITY #5

Self-Monitoring Questionnaire



Goal: This activity provides participants with an opportunity to learn about and reflect upon their tendency toward or against self-monitoring.



Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint Slide #21
- One copy for each participant of the “Self-Monitoring Assessment” worksheet
- Pen or pencil for each participant
- (Optional: provide each participant a copy of PowerPoint slide #22.)



Procedures:

- Hand each participant a copy of the “Self-Monitoring Assessment” worksheet.
- When done, clarify as follows: Explain that communication competency is both appropriate to the situation and effective in achieving the intended goals. It is situation-specific but competent communicators in an interpersonal capacity share common characteristics of self-awareness (self-monitoring), adaptability, empathy, cognitive complexity and ethics.
- (Transition to PowerPoint slide # 22 to continue and conclude.)
- Reveal one at a time, the meaning of each of the scores.
- Conclude: Explain that one’s awareness of self-monitoring is “at this moment in time.” This reflects how you see yourself right now in terms of being aware of your behavior and how it affects those around you. Self-monitoring is one way to become aware of tendencies and in the context of flexibility, gives us some insight. When working with others, be they patients or peers, subordinates or superiors, try to modify your style so that you are appropriate to the situation, including context and cultural expectations/norms so that you are effective in meeting the intended goals.



Self-Monitoring Assessment Worksheet

Directions: Read each of the statements below and indicate how much it describes you. Assign a point value to each statement. When done, total your score.

Use the following scale:

“The statement describes me”

7= To an extremely large extent

6= To a very large extent

5= To a large extent

4= To a moderate extent

3= To a small extent

2= To a very small extent

1= To an extremely small extent or not at all

Statement	Score
1. I tend to show different sides of myself to different people.	
2. I would probably make a good actor.	
3. I can usually tell when I've said something inappropriate by reading it in the listener's eyes.	
4. I pay attention to how other people react to my behavior.	
5. I can adjust my behavior to meet the requirements of any situation I'm in.	
6. I am often able to read people's true emotions through their eyes.	
7. I can usually tell when others are lying to me.	
8. I am not always the person I appear to be.	

Total Score (Circle which range it matches below):

7-22

23-38

39-56

(Adapted from Floyd, 2016)



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