

Communication Skills

I. Dialog ground rules:

- A. Respect one another
- B. Use "I" messages/statements
- C. One person speaks at a time
- D. Appreciate other's opinion
- E. Maintain confidentiality
- F. Clarify - Ask if you don't understand
- G. Be clear - use plain English, speak in specifics, not generalizations
- H. Recognize unique communication styles
- I. Give examples
- J. Avoid tendency for tunnel vision
- K. Speak so everyone can hear
- L. Speak the unspeakable

II. Active Listening skills:

- A. Nonverbal Clues
- B. Acknowledge what you hear- this is not agreement or approval Give minimal encouragement (nods, "uh-huh")
- C. Convey Empathy
- D. Reflect feelings
- E. Summarize
- F. Differentiate content from feelings

III. Asking Questions

- A. Interviewing Techniques
- B. Open-ended questions
- C. Focus speaker with questions
- D. Do not give advise or make judgement

IV. Provide Support and Encouragement

- A. Establish rapport
- B. Empower the survivor
- C. Give positive feedback
- D. Offer suggestions/options/ choices
- E. Avoid communication blocks and unhelpful phrases

According to one SAMHSA report, Consumers recognized interpersonal skills, non-verbal communication and sensitivity as the most helpful elements of a relationship leading to successful recovery.

Consumers expressed that their greatest personal frustration was not being listened to, not being believed, and not being allowed choices in the recovery process.

Relationships are founded on **trust** and the ability for each participant in the relationship to **listen**.

Having the support of one who cares is critical

Characteristics of successful relationships:

1. Connect with the individual's meaning system
2. Involve consumer in treatment goals
3. Offer choices
4. Listen to find what the consumer's needs
5. Recognize that each side has expertise
6. Address consumer language and cultural needs
7. Avoid labeling and stigmatization
8. Agree on terminology, jargon

Conclusion: A positive, successful relationship between the consumer and the worker is a fundamental component of the consumer's recovery process