



COMMUNICATION

MHA NJ CONNECT FOR RECOVERY

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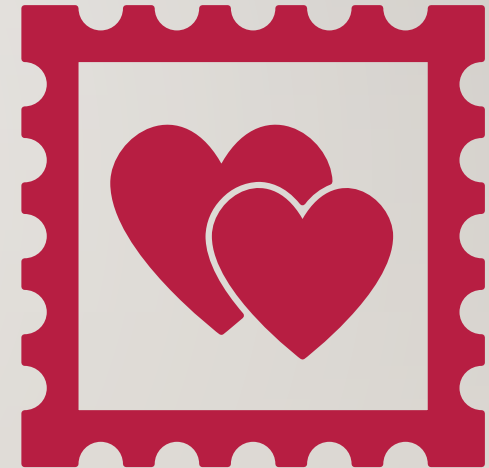
WHAT IS HEALTHY COMMUNICATION

- Healthy family communication is dynamic and nurturing.
- It's characterized by openness, honesty, empathy, and respect.
- Healthy communication involves family members actively listening to and empathically understanding each other while openly and honestly expressing their thoughts, feelings, and needs.
- It fosters an environment where everyone feels equally valued, heard, and respected.



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

- Effective communication is at the heart of successful family interaction. Begin by creating an open, honest environment for family communication.
- Family members should be willing to listen and consider different viewpoints. If they have an open mind, they'll have a more productive dialogue that allows them to explore underlying issues without defensiveness or judgment. Being open to change and new ways of interacting is the only way families can change entrenched patterns.
- A key is perspective taking where you take in the other person's perspective and find a way to say "good point" it doesn't mean you have to agree but are willing to consider their perspective



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Communication needs to be clear, honest, and respectful
- Family members can express their needs and feeling without fear of judgement or defensiveness
- The first step is being able to put one's feelings into words. This skill was called "focusing" by master clinician Eugene Gendlin. He said that when people are able to find the right images, phrases, metaphors, and words to fit our feelings, there is a kind of "resolution" one feels on one's body, an easing of tension. In intimate conversations, focusing makes conversations about feelings much deeper and more intimate, because the words *reveal who we are*.

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

Highlighting the importance of emotional connection and understanding



This includes fostering a sense of belonging and security



EMOTIONAL VALIDATION

- It is crucial that all members of the family unit feel their emotions are validated.
- It's a key part of building trust among the family.
- Active listening, reflective responses, and other techniques are all spokes in the wheel of emotional validation.
- Validation is simply: It makes sense that you would feel that way or you would see things that way

ACTIVE LISTENING

- Helping family members listen attentively, show genuine interest and respond without immediate judgment or advice is key.
- One family member speaks while the others listen and then summarize the speaker's words without adding their interpretations. This strategy lets everyone be heard and validated.
- Taking turns as a speaker and listener. The speaker's job is to speak using I statements, stay out of unhealthy communication patterns like the four horsemen, and express a positive need. The listener is listening with the purpose of understanding, postponing their agenda and reflecting back what they heard with empathy and validation. They then ask "Did I get that right" If not, ask "what am I missing"

REFLECTIVE RESPONSES

- Reflective response, or mirroring exercises, also reinforce effective communication in family therapy.
- In reflective responding, a family member repeats what another has just said, validates it, and then adds their own thoughts. Then the original speaker can respond in turn. When people practice reflective responses or mirroring, they can be sure they receive others' messages accurately.
- Active listening is a process that involves paraphrasing what another person has said. The goal is not necessarily to agree with everything they have said. Instead, it is about understanding their perspective so everyone feels heard and understood. This helps build trust between family members as well as improve overall communication.



I STATEMENTS

- Another common strategy is the use of “I” statements.
- These statements let people express their feelings and thoughts without casting blame. “I” statements reduce defensiveness and promote understanding. Instead of saying, “You make me angry,” someone might say, “I feel upset when this happens.” It is important to say “I heard you say” instead of saying “you said”. This cuts down on defensiveness because it is your reality (subjective) The way you start a conversation determines how the conversation is going to go

- “Instead of focusing on problematic behavioral patterns in order to change them, [this approach] places the focus on positive behavioral patterns, labeled ‘exceptions.’” This style of family intervention, most often used with young children and their parents or guardians, asks the adults to make note of the instances where they expected poor behavior but the child behaved well. Family members will discuss the situation and try to determine what, if any, of their actions helped contribute to the positive situation in order to repeat them in the future.
- Ask for what you want versus what you don’t want. This is called expressing a positive need

BEHIND EVERY
COMPLAINT IS
A LONGING

CREATING A CULTURE OF APPRECIATION AND RESPECT

- Fostering an environment where each member feels heard and valued, not just in moments of conflict or stress, but in all aspects of their home life is key.
- Reductions in misunderstandings, a stronger sense of unity, and an overall increase in the emotional well-being of the family unit are all possible.
- When we carry these principles of family into our daily lives, we unlock the potential for enduring positive change in our closest relationships.

ROLE PLAYING EXERCISE

- Role-playing can also help improve communication.
- It is a great way to practice and get comfortable with new communication skills. It helps you see how others might interpret what you say and how they respond, which can help you develop more effective communication patterns. Also, role-playing allows you to practice conflict resolution to react in the best possible way during difficult situations.
- In this activity, family members may swap roles and act out each other's behaviors and responses with the family therapist mediating. With this exercise, family members experience others' emotions and perspectives firsthand.



COMMUNICATING ABOUT COMMUNICATING

- All communication is communication: This includes non verbal communication
- Lack of eye contact
- Frowning
- Eye rolling
- Sighing
- Crossed arms
- Hands on hips
- Clenching fists

UNHEALTHY COMMUNICATION PATTERNS



Gestures can indicate that you are not listening to the other person or are getting defensive rather than remaining open to their perspective.



Family members can be more mindful of their body language to avoid sending negative signals to one another.



This includes avoiding the four horsemen: Criticism, Defensive, Stonewalling, and Contempt and using their antidotes instead

FOUR HORSEMAN



PRACTICING THE ANTIDOTES

- Instead of Criticism- Use a Gentle Start up which is I feel ...about... and I need
- Defensiveness – Taking responsibility even for a part of the problem
- Contempt – Describe Your own feelings and Needs
- Stonewalling – Do Physiological Self Soothing

ZOOM EXERCISE - REAL PLAYS

- In break out groups use a harsh start up and see what the response it then turn it around by using a gentle start up instead
- Example: Harsh Start Up: “You’re so lazy. You never take out the trash. DO I have to do everything around here!”
- Gentle Start up: “I feel so tired and overwhelmed. I need some help taking out the trash. Would you be able to help me.”

MANAGING CONFLICT CONSTRUCTIVELY

- Empathy is feeling with a person
- Empathy is shown by communication that these thoughts, feelings, and needs make sense to you. That you understand why the other person's experience. That does not mean that you necessarily agree with this person. You might, for example, have an entirely different memory or interpretation of events. Empathy means communicating that, *given your family member's perceptions*, these thoughts, feelings, and needs are valid and make sense. *You have your own perceptions. Both of your perceptions are valid.*

MANAGING CONFLICT CONSTRUCTIVELY

- Validation is that makes sense that you would feel that way
- Finding common ground which means you don't lose your position but find ways to compromise or have common ground.
- A key skill of conversations is helping one's family member explore his or her feelings by asking open-ended questions. This is done by either asking targeted questions, like, "What is your disaster scenario here?" or making specific statements that explore feelings like, "Tell me the story of that!"

HOW TO COMMUNICATE DIFFERENTLY

- When a family member talks, you do not have to agree with them.
- You can even disagree, but it is important not to interrupt or talk over them.
- This may be challenging at first, but making a conscious effort not to interrupt when a family member speaks allows them to feel heard.
- It also ensures that you take the time to listen to them while they are talking rather than just thinking about what you want to say next.
- Taking a deep breath before replying can also provide the space to respond with patience rather than reacting defensively.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

- Positive reinforcement is a way to encourage good behavior, which can be helpful in many situations.
- It encourages people to repeat their good behaviors because they know it will earn them something they like, whether tangible or intangible.
- For example, if your teen completes homework after school without complaint, they may earn privileges.
- Young people can also learn how to provide positive reinforcement to their parents, such as showing appreciation when a parent takes the time to listen to them.
- Focus on positive interactions and behaviors, praising and acknowledging positive actions and qualities



KEY STRATEGIES

- Practice active listening -Pay attention to what family members are saying, both verbally and nonverbally, and respond thoughtfully and empathetically
- Use I statements - Express your feelings and needs using "I" statements, rather than blaming or criticizing others
- Accept responsibility - Take ownership of your actions and apologize when you've made a mistake
- Stay respectful -Even during disagreements, maintain respect for family members' feelings and opinions
- Take breaks when needed -If emotions are running high, take a break to calm down and then return to the conversation later. Seek professional help - If you are still struggling with conflict or conflict resolution seek a licensed Family Therapist

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

- Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in healthy family communication.
- It enables individuals to manage their own emotions and be receptive to those of others.
- Additionally, healthy communication encompasses constructive conflict resolution, addressing disagreements with a focus on finding solutions and mutual understanding.
- At its core lies the need to adapt your communication style to suit each family member and situation.