

Communication Tips

How you say something is often just as important as what you say. Different communication techniques can either build bridges or create barriers among the many individuals you interact with. This fact sheet provides quick tips for effective communication strategies to help ensure you get your point across successfully.

Tip: Use “I” Statements

- “Own” your statements and views and do not claim to speak for others.
- Avoid saying “you” as people may feel they are being accused.
 - Don’t say, “When you don’t give my mother her medications on time...”
 - Say: “When my mother doesn’t receive her medications on time”
- Avoid words that are tied to a person’s perception.
- For example:
 - Don’t say: “she barged into the room.”
 - Instead use a neutral, factual statement: “she came into the room suddenly.”

Tip: Use “open-ended” questions

- Helps build rapport and shows empathy.
- You may gain more information.
- Avoid using “why” as people may feel like they are being accused or attacked.
- Use “how,” “tell me,” and “what”
- For example:
 - Don’t say: “Why were you late this morning?”
 - Say: “Help me understand what made you late this morning.”

Tip: Use “reflective listening”

- Way to validate and affirm the speaker by giving them the experience of being heard and acknowledged.
- Restate (in your own words) the content and/or feeling of what someone tells you.
- Types: paraphrasing, reflecting feeling and summarizing
- For example:
 - You’re concerned because dietary staff keep serving you food that you are allergic to. You talk to the nursing home administrator, who says: “We’ve had a lot of trouble with our dietary department lately. We can’t seem to keep our food services

supervisor for more than a few weeks. You have to understand that we're doing the best we can."

Reflective Listening Example

- Paraphrase: Your food services supervisors keep leaving and this is creating problems in the dietary department.
- Reflect feeling: "It must be frustrating that the turnover in food services supervisors is affecting the functioning of the dietary department.
- Summarize: "You're frustrated because you're having problems in the dietary department because of the turnover of food services supervisors. You feel that your staff is doing everything they can in the circumstances and hope that I will be patient during this time."

Additional Resources

- For more in-depth information on these and other related topics, see the *Piecing Together Quality Long-Term Care Guide* produced by Consumer Voice
<https://theconsumervoice.org/product/piecing-together-quality-long-term-care-a-consumers-guide-to-choices-and-advocacy>.

