

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The following are all ACTIVE LISTENING skills and techniques. Each Technique/Skill ACKNOWLEDGES the thoughts, words and experience of the speaker.

Technique/Skill	Function	Example
VALIDATING Support and acknowledgement of the parties' feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledges the feeling of hurt and conveys respect, acceptance • Allows understanding of feelings and other perspective 	"You're feeling overwhelmed by having to make these decisions... where do you begin?"
REFLECTING (in the form of a question) Checking in and interpreting what you have heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to clarifying, reflecting provides an opening for a richer and more thorough response • Allow an opportunity to expand upon and clarify a perspective • An opportunity to confirm and acknowledge feelings 	"You're feeling like your efforts aren't being recognized or respected by the ICU staff, or by me... am I accurate?"
MIRRORING Repeating /echoing the other party's words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reflective technique that uses the exact words • Provides opportunity for the patient or family member to hear their words • Allows time and space for the patient or family member to continue their thought or expand on it • invites expansion on the comment 	Family: "I can't believe this is happening. Just yesterday he was out jogging." [Silent pause.] Practitioner: "He was out jogging just yesterday..."
REFRAMING Turning a negative statement into a positive or more neutral statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps clarify and de-escalate conflict. • Tones down blaming or critical statements and provides context • Converts a complaint into a problem solving action • Can help identify the interests behind a stated position 	"This frustration you're feeling really says a lot about how much you both love your mother."
PARAPHRASING Using your own words to interpret your colleague's thoughts and feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lets the speaker know that you hear the message they are sending • Gives the receiver (perceiver) the same opportunity • Slows down the pace of the conversation 	"You feel like we have been disrespectful and neglectful in your mother's care."
QUESTIONING Appropriate use of open & close-ended questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opens up discussion • Allows exchange of information. • Encourages expression • Obtains fact and feeling information. • Confirms understanding • Provides who/what/ where/why/how insight 	Open: "Can you help me understand more about...?" Closed: "When did you decide to...?"

Technique/Skill	Function	Example
<p>CLARIFYING Checking to verify facts, information, or feelings that have been expressed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof positive that you are listening closely • Helps elucidate or disarm conflict issues 	<p>“You’re finding this hard because you’re not sure if it’s what your mother would have really wanted... Is that right?”</p>
<p>OBSERVATION Commenting on what you see and what that indicates to you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence for the party that you are involved, aware and listening closely to both verbal language and non verbal signals • Opportunity to further clarify or expand information 	<p>“I can see how angry you are about all this.” “While we’ve been taking about your mom, I noticed that you haven’t been looking at me. I’m wondering if there’s something upsetting you.” “You seem surprised to hear this.”</p>
<p>LINKING Making a connection between statements, issues, etc., that require an explanation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining why you are asking questions – especially with sensitive topics helps one understand and locate themselves in the conversation when and if it shifts 	<p>“In order to understand... I would like to ask you more about...”</p>
<p>ASKING PERMISSION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respects and empowers party self-determination and autonomy 	<p>“I need to ask you a sensitive [or difficult] question so I can understand... Is that OK with you??”</p>
<p>NORMALIZING Stabilizing common anxiety or concerns that leave one or both parties feeling uncertain or vulnerable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements intended to decrease anxiety and increase comfort/ease. • Inclusive, reassuring, may ease feelings of isolation 	<p>“Many people in these circumstances struggle in the same way. It makes sense that you are feeling so upset.”</p>
<p>Use “AND” instead of “YES, BUT”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “and” connects and provides possibilities in a difficult conversation, can diffuse volatile emotion • “but” dismisses the content and feeling of prior statements, can escalate conflict 	<p>“Yes you’re angry, but there’s no need to yell.” ...Instead... “You’re really angry and it’s important we talk about the situation.”</p>
<p>SUMMARIZING Brief verbal reviews throughout your conversation. Final summary moving to settlement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to maintain a mutual and accurate understanding of facts, interests, needs and positions • Keeps the discussion on track i.e. “where we are” • Helps focus the parties • A final summary of your mutual agreement enhances the resolution process 	<p>“You think we don’t respect your efforts and goals, so you have been unwilling to engage in any more discussion with us.”</p>