

# Session 5: Communication Styles

## Session Plan

1. Review Thought Record and Behaviour Record, if completed
2. How to Express Yourself Effectively
3. Practicing Assertiveness Skills
4. Communicating with Someone with Memory Problems
5. Stress Reduction Technique: *Meditation*
6. Summary



# Review

# How to Express Yourself Effectively

We all communicate in different ways. We are going to talk about three different styles of communicating today: We will call these passive, aggressive and assertive. Most people use these different styles at different times or in different situations.

## Passive Communication

### EXAMPLE: Passive Communication

Sylvia takes care of her husband, who has memory problems. She has arranged for her husband to stay with her brother, Daniel, while she attends a weekly exercise class. An hour before the class, Daniel calls to say that he has changed his mind and doesn't want to take care of her husband after all. Sylvia responds by saying, "That's okay, I really didn't need to go after all."

## Discussion

How might you feel after this kind of experience?



## Passive Communication

- Can involve communicating thoughts and feelings indirectly and apologetically, allowing others to easily disregard them
- Can involve reluctance to express difficult feelings openly
- Puts other peoples needs above your own
- Seeks to please others and to avoid conflict at any cost
- Sends the following message:

*"I don't count. My feelings don't matter; only yours do. I'm not important."*

## Aggressive Communication

### EXAMPLE: Aggressive Communication

Sylvia responds to Daniel's decision not to take care of her husband by saying, "I'm sick and tired of you not thinking of me. You promised to take care of him, and I'm going to hold you to that promise whether you like it or not! I'm not interested in hearing any excuses!"

### Discussion

How might Daniel react?  
How might you feel after this kind of experience?  
What might be the effect?



### Aggressive Communication

- Can involve standing up for personal rights and expressing thoughts in an unhelpful way (e.g., becoming angry, verbally attacking)
- Can ignore other people's points of view
- Seeks to force the other person to agree with you
- Sends out the following message:

*"This is what I think; you're wrong to think differently. This is what I want; what you want doesn't matter. This is what I feel; I don't care about your feelings."*

## Assertive Communication

### EXAMPLE: Assertive Communication

Sylvia responds to Daniel's statement that he doesn't want to take care of her husband by saying, "It's important that I get a break. I know you're busy, but can you find time to give me a break even if its not today."

### Discussion

How might the effects of this interaction be different from the previous examples?

### Assertive Communication

- Involves expressing your own opinions while respecting the views of others
- Involves expressing your thoughts directly and honestly
- Can increase the chance that your requests are understood, and that you will have a better result
- Leads to problem solving and negotiation
- Communicates the following message:

*"This is what I think. This is what I feel. This is how I see the situation. Your thoughts and feelings are also important."*



## How do you communicate?

1. How do you think you communicate with doctors, health care workers or with other service professionals?
2. What about in situations with family members or friends? Or when trying to obtain help from others?
3. What about with the person you care for with memory loss?
4. Would you like to change your communication pattern in any of these situations (e.g., with family, friends, health care professionals, or the person you look after with memory loss)?

## Practicing Assertiveness Skills

### Analysing the situation

We are going to look at how you communication with your relative a little later. Now we are going to be looking at asking for help. Think of a situation you were recently in where you asked someone for help with or information relating to your relative and things didn't go right.



### Practicing assertive communication

In a minute, we will talk through a situation that occurred with someone you have asked for help when it didn't go as you would have liked.

Try to be aware of how to be effective and assertive in your approach. On the next page are some tips to consider first:

## **TIPS TO REMEMBER FOR ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION**

1. Think about what do you want or need
2. What exactly is the problem? Formulate this in one or two sentences
3. Try to describe your thoughts and feelings clearly
4. Give detailed information about what you need. E.g. taking care of Mum for two hours involves feeding her a snack, turning the radio to her favourite station, and taking her to the bathroom
5. Be persistent and flexible: Maybe you won't get exactly what you asked for, but you will get something that will be helpful
6. Break it down into smaller parts or ask for things one at a time – it's usually easier for people to say yes to a little request than to a big one!
7. If you feel stuck – agree to think about it and talk again
8. Recognise that sometimes there isn't a solution
9. Remember to recognise the difference between what you want and what the person you care for wants. They might not always be the same
10. **DON'T GIVE UP!** It may take many attempts before things change.

Discussion:

How did you find practicing assertive communication?

What could you have done differently?

What went well and what techniques would you use again?



## Communicating with Someone with Memory Problems

Communicating with someone with memory problems can be challenging. You may now or in the future, feel as if you have to jump over many hurdles. When we feel frustrated it can be even harder to communicate clearly.

You may know some of the following already, or it may be new information:

Memory problems may future affect communication in a number of ways:

- They may affect your relative's ability to understand what you say.
- They may limit your relative's ability to express what he or she wants to say.
- Increased memory problems may lead to an inability to remember thoughts from one moment to the next.

**IMPORTANT POINT: Because people with memory problems often cannot change their communication patterns, we need to find other ways to communicate with them.**

Let's look at an example.



Gloria wants her husband John to go to bed. He is watching television. She shouts from the kitchen that it's time for bed. He ignores her. She shouts louder for him to turn off the television and get ready for bed. John continues to ignore her so she begins to cry and locks herself in the bathroom.

How could Gloria have done things differently?

## How to talk to someone with memory problems

### Helping you or your relatives listening and understanding

#### Attention

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- Try to catch the attention of your relative before beginning to speak.
- Reduce distractions when talking to your relative, e.g. switching off the television.
- Position yourself so that your relative can see you clearly and make eye contact.
- Touching your relative may help you to attract their attention.

#### Environment

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- Sit closely, ensure that background noise is minimal and that lighting is good.

#### Aiding understanding / listening

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- Try to listen carefully to what your relative is saying and gently encourage them.
- If they find it difficult to communicate what they mean, listen for clues, allow plenty of time, encourage them to explain in other ways.
- If you have had to guess what they mean, check out with your relative that you have understood them correctly.
- If you become frustrated or irritated, change the subject or take a break and talk about it later.

## Being understood

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- Speak clearly, slowly and calmly, try not to raise your voice.
- Try counting to ten in your mind after asking your relative a question, to allow them time to answer.
- Make instructions clear and simple, using short sentences.
- Try to ask only simple questions, one at a time, allowing for yes/no answers or try to avoid questions.
- If you are not being understood, try again in a different way, perhaps using actions, objects or signs as well as words.

**You may have to try some different communication techniques and see what works for both of you. You may also have to change and adapt your communication over time.**

### Discussion

What changes have you noticed in your relative's ability to express themselves?

How have you changed the way you communicate with him/her?

Which of these tips do you already use?

Which of these tips do you think you will start using?

## Communication Record

If you would like we can record an example of difficult communication with your relative.

<b>Situation</b>	<b>What I said or did in the situation</b>	<b>How the situation turned out</b>	<b>How I felt</b>

# Stress Reduction Practice: *Meditation*

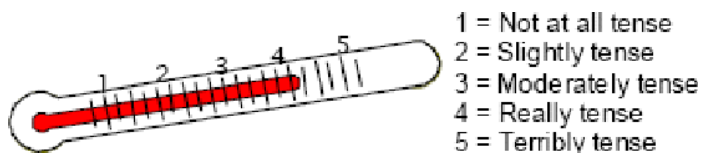


## Introduction

Today we are going to do a meditation technique. This technique will involve combining pleasant imagery with various physical sensations. The theory behind this technique is that visualizing yourself in a relaxing scene (e.g. a beach, forest, etc...) helps you to become less tense and focus better. Focusing on pleasant images will make it easier for you to focus on the relaxing physical sensations that I am going to repeat to you.

Throughout this procedure adopt a relaxed, passive and casual attitude. You can't force relaxation to occur. Try to give up conscious control of your body and allow your physical processes to flow naturally.

## Stress Rating Before Exercise



First, please rate your level of stress or tension right now, before we practice the Meditation. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your tension? \_\_\_\_\_

## Meditation: Practice Session

“Let’s begin... Settle comfortably in your chair and take in a deep, cleansing breath...

When you are ready, close your eyes and feel yourself becoming more and more relaxed with every breath...

Continue to breathe normally, as you picture yourself in a relaxing setting... You may be at the beach, or in a forest, or wherever you feel comfortable and at ease...

Take a moment to notice the details around you in this peaceful place and notice that you are becoming more and more relaxed...

Once you feel at ease in your special place, think to yourself,  
*‘I am at peace... My right arm is heavy... My left arm is heavy...’*

Now continue on your own, noticing your calm breathing and heartbeat, and the heavy, warm sensation in your arms and legs...

*‘I am at peace... My arms and legs are heavy and warm, my heartbeat is regular and calm... My breathing is calm... My breathing is calm... My abdomen is warm... I am at peace... My abdomen is warm... My abdomen is warm... I am at peace... My arms and legs are heavy and warm... my heartbeat is calm and regular... My breathing is calm... My abdomen is warm... My abdomen is warm...’*

Now, continue to notice the heaviness and warmth in your legs, and your calm and regular heartbeat and breathing and the warmth of your abdomen...

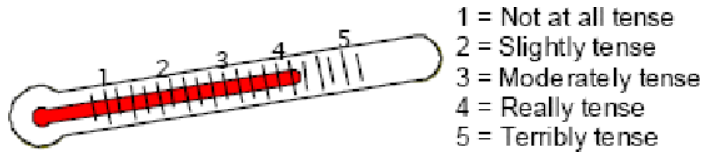
*‘I am at peace... My arms and legs are heavy and warm... my heartbeat is calm and regular... My breathing is calm... My breathing is calm... My abdomen is warm... My forehead is cool... My forehead is cool... I am at peace... My forehead is cool... My forehead is cool... I am at peace...’*

Now, continue to notice the sensations you feel throughout your body as you relax in your peaceful place...

Now, I am going to count from 3 to 1, and as I do, you will open your eyes and become more alert and aware of your surroundings... By the time I say 1, your eyes will be completely open, and you will feel alert, refreshed, and relaxed...

Here we go... Three... two... one... Your eyes are open and you are awake, alert, relaxed and aware of your surroundings...”

## Stress Rating after Exercise



On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your tension? \_\_\_\_\_

1. Did your level of tension change?
2. What was this experience like for you?
3. Can you think of a specific event when this technique might have been helpful during a stressful caregiving situation?



## Summary

Today we looked at:

- Different communication styles
- Passive communication
- Aggressive communication
- Assertive communication
- Communicating with someone with memory problems
- Stress reduction technique - *Meditation*

**For next week:**

√ **Planning for the Future:** Please read over the material for next week. It will help you to process this important information. Feel free to invite another family member who is helping you care to come to the session if you would like to.

√ **Communication Record:** Please use the sheet on **page 97** to monitor your verbal and non-verbal communication style over the next week.

√ **Stress Reduction Exercises:** Please carry on regularly practicing your preferred stress reduction exercises.

***Optional Exercises (Recommended):***

√ **Behaviour Record:** Please complete the Behavioural Record on **page 98** when your relative's target behaviour occurs. We understand it may be difficult to complete the Record each time the Behaviour occurs, but please complete it as frequently as possible.

√ **Thought Record:** When a situation occurs that stresses you, please record your unhelpful thoughts and challenge and replace them with more helpful thoughts. Use the Thought Record **on page 99**.

## Communication Record

Use this sheet to write down difficulties with communicating both verbally and nonverbally with your relative this week.

Write down a specific situation, how you communicate, how it turned out and what your feelings were. Try to complete this once a day, if you see them.

<b>Situation</b>	<b>What I said or did in the situation</b>	<b>How the situation turned out</b>	<b>How I felt</b>

## ***Optional Exercise: Behaviour Record***

Please use this Record to write something your relative does (or that you do) that upset you and the strategy you used to change it.

Date and time	People Present	Trigger	Behaviour	Reaction	The strategy you used to change the behaviour was:
					What happened when you tried using this strategy?

### ***Optional Exercise: Thought Record***

<b>Situation</b>  Describe the events that led to your unpleasant feelings.	<b>Current thoughts</b>  Identify your thoughts in the situation.	<b>Feelings</b>  What are you feeling? (sad, angry, anxious, etc)	<b>Challenge &amp; replace with more helpful thoughts</b>  What is a more helpful way of thinking about the situation?	<b>New feelings</b>  What are you feeling now? (sad, angry, anxious, etc)