

# **\*\*MODULE III**

## **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

### **\*\*LIFE EXPLAINED**

We will be taking a look at a few effective ways in which to communicate and, for purposes of contrast, we will even take a look at some ineffective ways people communicate. The important points are in your workbooks beginning on page 14, page 18 in the facilitator's guide.

**\*\*ACTIVE LISTENING:** Humans are designed to be good listeners; that's why we have two ears and one mouth. Unfortunately, many of us don't use this gift well. We may hear but we don't listen. The use of both verbal and non-verbal techniques lets others know that not only do you hear their words, but you are interested in them and involved in what is being said.

### **\*\*Non-Verbal techniques:**

1. Attend to the tone of your voice
2. Make eye contact.
3. Allow for comfortable silences.
4. Show interest with body language. Avoid facial expressions that show disapproval, boredom, etc. For example, lean toward the person to convey involvement.

### **\*\*Verbal techniques:**

1. Be encouraging. Use a positive tone of voice - the wrong tone will cancel the right words.
2. Restate what you hear – let the person know you grasp the facts. Avoid mindless echoing.
3. Reflect emotions – let the person know you understand by restating their feelings.
4. Summarize – pull important facts together and establish a basis for further discussion. <sup>1</sup>

### **\*\*COMMUNICATION BLOCKERS**

Blockers impede effective communication by turning off the listener. Generally speaking try to avoid labeling people, sarcasm, dragging up the past, making negative comparisons, sending judgmental "you" messages and making threats. Some of these communication blockers, such as ordering, demanding, are very effective when dealing with dangerous situations. But when dealing in intimate relationships they are to be avoided.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: Self-Help Network of Kansas

- **Ordering, demanding** – “Sit down now and talk to me.”
- **Threatening** – “If you don't shape up, I'm canceling our vacation!”
- **Interrogating** – “Why did you do that? What were you thinking? Did you think before?”
- **Diverting** – “Enough of this, what do you want for lunch?”
- **Stereotyping** – “How come women always talk so much?”
- **Minimizing** – “Why are you getting so upset over nothing? This is no big deal.”<sup>2</sup>

There is a complete list of communication blockers on page 15 in your workbooks, page 19 in the facilitator's guide.

## The "I Message"

"I messages" provide a positive avenue for communicating feelings under difficult circumstances. They can be used in many different types of situations. **Example:** “I feel hurt when you cancel plans at the last minute because I am left on my own and it's often too late to make other plans.”

**\*\***There are 3 basic parts to an "I message":

- **Feelings:** how this problem behavior makes you feel
- **Problem Behavior:** describe what behavior "bugs" you
- **Effects or Consequences:** the net result or consequences of 1 and/or 2

**\*\***Advantages of using "I messages":

- Helps to ease tension and conflict
- Reduces defensiveness
- Better prepares listener for feedback
- Fosters honest communication
- Assists you in defining the problem you are having and/or the message you want to send.

**\*\***Ideal situations to use "I messages":

- When being interrupted
- Stressful confrontations
- To prevent a potential stressful interaction

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from: Dr. Gary Olson, Police Psychologist, Palo Alto, CA

- To give criticism or express feelings.

**\*\*Example:** “I feel hurt (feeling) when you cancel plans at the last minute (problem behavior) because I am left on my own and it’s often too late to make other plans (effects).”

### **Win-Win Partnerships**

How you solve problems as a couple depends in part on the way you view the situation and how well you are equipped to deal with the event. Using a Win-Win model will help turn couple meetings from gripe sessions to effective communication. You gain from the way in which you care for and help each other’s needs to be met and your relationship is thereby strengthened.

**\*\*Win-Win strategies start with the realization that both members of the couple are on the same team. We try to achieve a win-win solution by broadening the picture and creatively addressing the concerns of both people. Despite your differences, assume a stance in which you and your partner are allies and want each other’s needs to be met.**

In the early stages of learning the Win-Win technique, choose a conflict in the low to moderate range of concern. Do not attempt to work on very difficult problems before you develop facility with the technique.

- \*\*1. Identify and define the conflict – (from each person’s perspective.)**
  - 1a. Explore underlying concerns: reasons, fears, desires for positions
  - 1b. Try to gain a better understanding, be more compassionate, and get more data to better address the underlying concerns. Check with the other to see if you are being understood.
- 2. Generate possible solutions – brainstorm and develop new ideas that attempt to meet all concerns. (Engage contributions from each person.)**
- 3. Evaluate solutions – eliminate ideas that are crazy, dangerous, too expensive, irrational, unreasonable, etc. (Each person should get some of what they want.)**
- 4. Pick the best solution – the best solution is one that is acceptable to both parties. (This often involves giving from both parties)**
- 5. Implement the decision – Discuss, agree upon and describe who is to do what, when where and how. It often helps to write down the agreement and have both parties initial it. (Be specific: who, what, where, when, how?)**
- 6. Evaluate the results – Check for left over concerns. Feel free to bring up concerns if they emerge later on. (If a solution doesn’t work better ones can be developed.)**

### **\*\*The Art of Active Listening**

To sum up, what we've learned:

- Use "I" Messages
- Paraphrase what you think the other person just said
- Clarify what you don't understand
- Be aware of your body language
- Avoid communication blockers
- Share feelings
- Give positive feedback
- Use Win-Win problem solving

This was the last of our lectures. All the information we've just covered and more can be found in your workbook.