

Skillful Communication with Elders

With the gradual aging of the population, our contact with elders also increases. In our interaction with elders, effective communication can not only reduce misunderstandings, conflicts and stress; it is also important in maintaining a cheerful mood and in promoting good interpersonal relationships.

I. Communication with Elders

In communicating with elders, pay attention to the physical, psychological and environmental factors in individual situations, and apply appropriate communication skills accordingly. Thoughtfulness as well as appropriate time arrangement is essential.

II. Communication Skills

1. Listening

- Listen patiently with our ears
- Understand thoughtfully with our heart
- Comprehend the concealed meaning with our mind

2. Techniques in Conversation and Use of Language

(i) Techniques in Conversation

- Appropriate speed and tone of talking:
 - Adjust the speed and tone of talking according to the elder's need
 - e.g. talk with elders with dementia with a slower pace; while talking loudly with elders with hearing problem, be cautious with the tone to avoid the misunderstanding that they were being scolded
- Appropriate questioning:
 - e.g. use leading questions to elicit elders' "yes" or "no" reply
- Give others the chance to talk:
 - e.g. avoid dominating the conversation, encourage elders to take an active role instead
- Change topics skillfully:
 - Make use of surrounding objects to change the topic when the elder found the conversation uninteresting
 - e.g. "Who bought you this special dress?"

(ii) Use of Language

- Use simple and concrete words
 - e.g. use "eat one fruit with each meal" to replace "eat more fiber"
- Use short and simple sentences
 - e.g. one message in each sentence

3. Techniques of Non -Verbal Communication

- Attitude: be friendly, kind, sincere and respectful, avoid being impatient, indifferent or contemptuous
- Eye contact: keep eye contact
- Facial expression: reflect different moods
- Posture and gesture: e.g. nodding, appropriate movements, appropriate positioning of chairs
- Touch: e.g. holding hands, patting the hand, embracing
(**Caution:** apply the skill of touch appropriately, taking into consideration the sex of the elder, and your relationship with him/her)
- Use of diagrams and actual objects:
e.g. to ask an elder with impairment of language function to take a bath, make use of the picture of a shower.

III. Use of Appropriate Skills under Different Situations

Influential Factors		Communication Skills
1. Physical Aspect	<p>i) Hearing - Deterioration in hearing</p> <p>ii). Vision - Cataract and long-sightedness are common problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak in a louder voice • Speak with a slower pace • Encourage the elder to use appropriate hearing aid • Use gestures and facial expressions • Use diagrams, or write down the message for the elder to read. • Introduce the environment and the people around
2. Psychological Aspect	<p>i) Thinking - Difference in the way of thinking</p> <p>- Prejudice</p> <p>ii) Mood - Can affect the quality of communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciate the standpoint and feelings of others from their angle • Immediate feedback and confirmation to reduce misunderstandings • Exchange of opinions so as to reach agreement • Beware of whether your opinion is logical and based on reason • Do not allow illogical beliefs to affect your judgment and analysis • Pay attention to each other's mood • Be considerate and soothe the emotions
3. Environmental Aspect	<p>i) Disturbance - Will affect concentration</p> <p>ii) Privacy - Especially important when personal or confidential topics are involved</p> <p>iii) Adequacy of time - Can facilitate clarity in communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the noise and disturbance in the environment • Provide a comfortable environment • Maintain privacy to provide a sense of security • Appropriate time arrangement

In communicating with elders, we must try to be understanding and to be good at expressing ourselves. The effect of communication is the result of mutual influence, just like a mirror. The accomplishment of good communication relies on effort from both parties.

HOMEMAKERS, REVIEW THIS INFORMATION, SIGN BELOW, THEN RETURN TO: BILLY DAVIS, RN; PO BOX 2; MABEN, WV 25870

HOMEMAKER'S SIGNATURE

DATE