

COMPARISON of COMMUNICATION SKILLS for SUPERVISORS

| SKILL | WHEN to USE | EXAMPLE |
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| Accentuating the Positive (ATP) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reinforce positive behaviors and/or successes • To build staff’s skills and capacity • To build staff’s self-esteem and self-confidence | <p>Step 1: Observe for positive behaviors, strengths and/or successes <i>A home visitor takes a leadership role in organizing a holiday party for program families.</i></p> <p>Step 2: Affirm the behavior (creating pleasure) “You’re really stepping up for the holiday party, and it’s coming together beautifully.”</p> <p>Step 3: Describe (or invite the home visitor to describe) the positive impact of this behavior on the family, home visitor, co-workers, and/or program. “What do you notice about how your enthusiasm effects other staff?” “Your enthusiasm is contagious – everyone’s jumping in to help out this year.”</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase a behavior or skill you want to see more of • To build staff’s abilities and capacity | <p>Step 1: Identify a behavior you want to see more of <i>The home visitor eagerly implementing strategies identified in the Service Plan</i></p> <p>Step 2: Observe for this behavior <i>During supervision, the home visitor excitedly tells you that she spoke with Mom about counseling. Mom decided she wants to pursue counseling, and even made an appointment.</i></p> <p>Step 3: Affirm the behavior (creating pleasure) “Wow– what a great success!”</p> <p>Step 4: Describe (or invite the home visitor to describe) the impact of this behavior on the family, home visitor, co-workers, and/or program. “What was your part in helping her be open to counseling?” “Counseling may really help her address her depression so she can better attend to her baby – and you’re helping her get there.”</p> |
| Explore and Wonder | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase staff members’ empathy and ability to read and interpret parental cues/behaviors • To maintain curiosity about how trauma may be impacting parents’ behavior • To address chronic situations | <p>Step 1: Describe the interaction/practice you are concerned about. WAIT (give staff time to reflect) “I notice that you seem less enthusiastic about working doing Parent Surveys lately.”</p> <p>Step 2: If no response, explore what she/he thinks is going on. “I’m curious. What do you think is going on?”</p> <p>Step 3: When the staff members’ interpretation/perception seems inconsistent with what you believe is occurring, state what you think may be happening.</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To build staff self-awareness and self-observation skills | <p>“I wonder if it’s because a lot of the families you’ve met with lately have been far away, meaning a lot of travel time for you.”</p> <p>Step 4: Ask the staff member if your thoughts are accurate “What do you think?”</p> <p>Step 5: Offer an opportunity work together on a plan to resolve the issue. “Would you be willing to explore this with me? Maybe working together would bring clarity to the situation.”</p> |
| Feel: Name & Tame | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whenever a staff person states a strong feeling or exhibits feelings through the body (energy shifts, facial and body language, etc.) | <p>Step 1: Observe for emotional content. Home visitor crosses their arms in front of their chest and appears to withdraw while discussing a particular family.</p> <p>Step 2: Guide the staff person to focus on their experience in the moment. “What are you experiencing as we talk about this family?”</p> <p>Step 3: Reflect back to the staff person with empathy “I wonder if you’re feeling a bit overwhelmed by this family and their issues.”</p> <p>Step 4: Invite the staff person to name their emotional experience if they haven’t already. “How would you describe what you’re feeling?”</p> |
| Normalizing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When staff state an opinion or belief about parenting or child development that is not supported by research or experience When you want to share new information or research that can enhance staff’s work and relationships with families | <p>Step 1: Identify the erroneous belief or opinion <i>A home visitor is upset because in one family she serves, as per the family’s culture, Dad has complete control of all decision making.</i></p> <p>Step 2: Normalize “Depending on the culture, families can have a strong matriarchal or patriarchal structure, and many staff have struggled with this.”</p> <p>Step 3: Share current research and/or information “What we know from research is that supporting the culture of each family is the only way to deliver services. By finding ways to include dad - and other family members - in the visit, everyone gets to benefit from your services.”</p> <p>Step 4: Check in to see if this information is helpful “What do you think? Can we come up with some ideas about how to include dad during home visits?”</p> |

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| Solution-focused Talk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist staff in clarifying a problem • To encourage staff to explore all aspects of a problem before offering suggestions to families • To expand staff’s thinking related to their work with families • To assist staff in moving from a defensive or survival mindset (brainstem) to a positive limbic (emotional) experience and into the cortex (thinking and reflecting) | <p>Scenario: Home visitor reports that a family he works with abruptly started no-showing for visits.</p> <p>“What do you think is going on with this family? What might be causing them to no-show?” “What has the family said about their experience of the program?” “In general, how would you describe your relationship with the family?” “What have you tried so far to re-engage the family?” “What are you feeling in response to their no-shows?”</p> |
| Open-ended questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To invite staff to self-reflect and think critically • To encourage staff to share in-depth about their work • To show respect for staff’s autonomy, and allow them to showcase their expertise and knowledge | <p>“What was your part in creating such a great outcome for the family?” “How do you go about planning out all the home visits you need to make for the month?” “How did you help the parents advocate for themselves?” “What are the family’s concerns about their immigration status?” “This family has come so far. How does it feel to know that you made such a difference in their lives?”</p> |
| Affirmation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support and praise staff’s actions and accomplishments • To reinforce positive behaviors • To build staff members self-esteem and self-confidence | <p>“Wow. You kept your commitment and completed all of your documentation on time!” “It was a struggle for you to engage this family, but you kept trying. Now they’re back in the program and growing so much as parents.” “Wow! What a creative approach to addressing the issue of spanking!” “The way you presented the curriculum really helped them understand the concepts and gain new skills.”</p> |

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| Reflection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To show you are listening and understanding by stating back the essence of what a person said. • To check whether you understand the person's meaning • To draw out the underlying feeling in the person's statement | <p>“You feel frustrated by the family’s lack of commitment to the program.” “If I understand you right, you’re ready to find a new approach to tracking your needed home visits.” “So, you think Dad isn’t ready to look for a job?” “You wonder whether all of the effort you put into your work with families is worth it.” “The fact that this mom learned so many new parenting skills has really inspired you!”</p> |
| Summary | To show understanding, move the conversation forward, and prepare the person to take action by linking together what has been discussed | <p>“On the one hand, you’re frustrated by the demands of writing up home visit narratives, and on the other, you know that documentation helps you see the parent’s progress. Now you’re wondering how you can make documentation easier for you since it’s clearly valuable.”</p> |
| Supporting Autonomy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support staff in thinking for themselves, being creative, and taking the initiative in their own work • To show your respect for their self-knowledge and knowledge of families they serve | <p>“You know yourself best. What would work for you?” “You’re the expert on this family. What do you think they need in order to experience success?” “You have experience with a lot of different approaches to helping families. What strategy do you think would work best with this family?”</p> |