

## Module 7 – Social and Behaviour Change- Child Protection

### Session 1: Defining Communication

Duration: 7:42 minutes

#### Session 1.3 Skills for Effective Communication

Session objectives:

At the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- list out the importance of building rapport, active listening, giving examples, paraphrasing, encouragement while making effective communication
- appreciate the importance of listening and comprehending before responding during a dialogue
- differentiate between open-ended and close-ended questions and shall be able to use them

Let us begin the session with a caselet.

#### Communication skills

In the caselet we saw effective communication did not happen because possibly the NGO functionary did not have the necessary skills.

More than just the words used, effective communication combines a set of skills including non-verbal communication, engaged or active listening, managing stress in the moment, the ability to communicate assertively and the capacity to recognize and understand one's own emotions and those of the person who is being communicated with.

In the previous caselet we saw that NGO functionary did not spend time in getting to know Rama and establish a connection with her. As a result, effective communication could not happen.

To avoid this one of the most important communication skills is building rapport.

Rapport is a state of harmonious understanding with another individual or group that enables greater and easier communication. In other words, making a connection or rapport is getting on well with another person, or group of people, by having things in common, and this makes the communication process easier and usually more effective.

Some helpful rapport building behaviours are:

- i. Break the ice.
- ii. Use non-threatening and 'safe topics' for initial small talk. Talk about established, shared experiences, the weather, 'how you travelled to where you are?'
- iii. Use the child's/other person's name early in the conversation. This is not only seen as polite and helps in building the rapport but also reinforces the name in the mind, so one is less likely to forget it.

- iv. Avoid asking direct questions about the other person.
- v. Listen to what the other person is saying, and looking for shared experiences or circumstances gives more to talk about in the initial stages of communication.
- vi. Look at the other person for approximately 60% of the time, giving plenty of eye contact but being careful not to make them feel uncomfortable.
- vii. Lean forward towards the person one is talking to, with hands open and arms and legs uncrossed. This is open body language and helps the speaker as well as the child who is being talked to, feel more relaxed.
- viii. Make sure the other person feels included but not interrogated during initial conversations.
- ix. Put the other person at ease; this will enable him to relax and conversation to take on a natural course.
- x. Although initial conversations can help to relax, most rapport-building happens without words and through non-verbal communication channels.
- xi. Voice Modulation: Vary voice, pitch, volume and pace in ways to make what we are saying more interesting but also to come across as more relaxed, open and friendly. Try lowering tone, talk more slowly and softly, as this will help to develop rapport more easily.
- xii. When in agreement with the child/other person, say so openly and share why, building on the child's/other person's ideas.
- xiii. Be non-judgemental, letting go of stereotypes and any preconceived ideas about the child/other person.
- xiv. If there is disagreement with the other person, give the reason first, rather than saying that you disagree.
- xv. Admit when don't know the answer or having made a mistake. Being honest works best, acknowledging mistakes shows your humbleness and it helps to build trust.
- xvi. Be genuine, with visual and verbal behaviours working together to maximize the impact of communication.
- xvii. Offer a compliment, avoid criticism and be polite.
- xviii. Create and maintain rapport subconsciously through matching non-verbal signals, including body positioning, body movements, eye contact, facial expressions and tone of voice with the other person. It is important that appropriate body language is used.

Another important communication skill is showing empathy.

Demonstrate that you can see the other person's point of view. Remember rapport is all about making a connection with other person by finding similarities and 'being on the same wavelength' as somebody else, so being empathetic will help to achieve this.

Empathy is, at its simplest, awareness of the feelings and emotions of other people. It is a key element of Emotional Intelligence; the link between self and others. It is how we as individuals understand what others are experiencing as if we were feeling it ourselves.

Empathy goes far beyond sympathy, which means ‘feeling for’ someone. Empathy instead is ‘feeling with’ that person, through the use of imagination.

“Empathy is awareness of others’ feelings, needs and concerns” (Daniel Goleman, in Working with Emotional Intelligence).

Let us see a video to understand empathy better.

In the film clip from Munna Bhai MBBS, the character Munna sees a health worker cleaning the floor and a nurse passes over the cleaned floor making him angry. Munna shows how he approaches the angry and disgruntled worker and makes effective communication. His body language (Jadu ki Jhappi) makes the worker happy, even though he also makes the mistake of walking over the cleaned floor. In this clip, Munna showed empathy towards the worker by acknowledging his menial and never ending task

**Empathy, Sympathy and Compassion** There is an important distinction between empathy, sympathy and compassion. Both compassion and sympathy are about feeling for someone; seeing their distress and realizing that they are suffering. Compassion has taken on an element of action that is lacking in sympathy, but the origin of the words is the same. Empathy, by contrast, is about experiencing those feelings for yourself, as if you were that person, through the power of imagination.

Another fundamental skill of communication is listening.

Listening is not something that just happens (that is hearing); listening is an active process in which a conscious decision is made to listen to and understand the messages of the speaker.

Listeners should remain neutral and non-judgmental; this means trying not to take sides or form opinions, especially early in the conversation.

Active listening is also about patience – pauses and short periods of silence should be accepted. Listeners should not be tempted to jump in with questions or comments every time there are a few seconds of silence.

Active listening involves giving the other person time to explore their thoughts and feelings. They should, therefore, be given adequate time for that.

Interest can be conveyed to the speaker by using both verbal and non-verbal messages, such as maintaining eye contact, nodding head and smiling, agreeing by saying ‘Yes’ or simply ‘Mmm hmm’ to encourage them to continue. By providing this ‘feedback’, the person speaking will usually feel more at ease and therefore communicate more easily, openly and honestly.