



EmpowerMed

Communication *Training module*





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Overview of module 'Communication'

Learning objectives

- Help participants grasp the general principles of communication
- Get to know communication models
- Learn to deal with different environments
- Improve skills on communication with different target groups (vulnerable ones)
- Obtain basic attitude by practising skills (listening and asking questions)
- Increase participants' knowledge on how to use contacts to work and share information more effectively

Contents

- Perception
- Forms of communication
- Communication models
- Appreciative language
- Active listening
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- Do's and don't's in communication
- Preparing yourself
- Behaviour in households

1 Perception

Perception is a construction process. We must arrive at the truth based on what we perceive by our sensory organs. We construct our perception of the truth by the way we perceive and also by the messages conveyed by speech, according to the meaning which words have for us. The meaning which words and perception have for us depends upon our previous experiences. We expand upon our impressions from previous experiences and prejudices (projection principle).

We perceive the world through a filter (selective perception):

- Biological filters: e.g. colour blindness, deafness, blindness
- Psychological filters: upbringing, expectations

There are different types of perception, depending on the individual brain structure

- Visual type – perceives the environment primarily by what one sees/by the eyes (such as an artist)

- Phonetic type – perceives the environment primarily by hearing (such as a musician)
- Sensitive type – perceives the environment primarily by moods in dealing with others

Perception is subjective and selectively characterised. The truth is not what I say, but what the other person hears. Conveying information often entails the distortion and loss of information. The quality of your work therefore depends upon your ability to convey information as precisely as possible.

2 Forms of communication

A basic rule for communication is: One cannot fail to communicate. This means that it is not possible not to communicate something to another person. Thus, for example, silence, turning away, leaving the room, avoiding visual contact or not following up a point of discussion all serve to convey an impression. This behaviour also communicates a message to the other person.

There are three forms of communication: verbal, para-linguistic and non-verbal communication.

Verbal communication

This refers to all elements of speech: words, letters, sentences and numbers. Purely verbal communication is very difficult. As we have already learned in the discussion of perception, what we say is frequently understood very differently by the person with whom we are speaking, because the other person has a different understanding of the words we choose. Speech conjures up images which the person speaking and the person addressed do not always understand this in the same way, frequently representing a source and cause of misunderstandings and anger.

Para-linguistic communication


This refers to the manner in which we speak: intonation, speaking rate, pauses, laughing, sighing. These elements are influenced by sensations, such as nervousness, as indicated by "ums" and "hms", speaking rate or, for example, irritation and anger expressed by speaking loudly.

Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication includes: body language (posture, gestures and facial expressions) and external attributes, such as clothing.

Posture: The manner in which a person appears before another person for the purpose of discussions, for example with shoulders hanging, breast stretched forward, etc.

Gestures: Forms of expression by the body - nodding the head is signalling agreement, pat on the back is signalling encouragement, shaking hands is greeting. These gestures are however not understood in the same way in all cultural groups.



Facial expressions: The signals conveyed by facial expressions are nearly identical in all cultural groups. They therefore have a significant influence on communication. E.g. laughing is signalling pleasure, drooping corners of the mouth is signalling sadness.

Gaze: The gaze is an important instrument for establishing contact. It can demand contact, signal distance, express sympathy and feelings...

External attributes: External attributes, such as clothing or jewellery, but also status symbols, such as car or watch create and characterise the impressions conveyed. This represents a type of code, characterising a certain image of a person, for example prestigious clothing or hippy clothing.

The effect of the messages we communicate is comprised of

- 55% body language
- 38% verbal capabilities
- 7% choice of words

Body language has a significant influence on communication. However, the messages we convey can sometimes be ambiguous. Example sobbing: This can express joy or sorrow, but it can also result from slicing onions. Body language expresses feelings and these influence one's own feelings via electrical impulses via the nerve pathways. Example: Laughing during a discussion influences our own emotional state.

We emphasise verbal expressions by non-verbal signals. Confusion arises for a partner in discussion when our body language communicates something different than the spoken word. Due to their upbringing and their role model, women frequently tend to laugh. This entails a significant danger of being misunderstood and not taken seriously, particularly by men.

3 Communication models

Message not only contains information or a communication, hence it is also necessary to consider several aspects:

- Factual information: Data and facts are mostly referred to in concrete terms. Viewed objectively, what does the person speaking really communicate? Is generally speaking relevant only for specialist conferences or speeches.
- Self-revelation: What does the person speaking reveal about himself or herself? This aspect is frequently on the non-verbal level. Conscious and unconscious, open and concealed messages.
- Level of relating to others: How does the person speaking see his or her relationship to the person addressed? What is my opinion of the person I am addressing? What is our relationship (friends, superior – employee, etc.)? Mostly between the lines (intonation, facial expressions, manner of formulation, choice of words).
- Appeal level: What is my speaking intended to achieve? Influencing: I want to achieve a certain goal, activate and convince the person I am addressing to do something. In the focus of advertising or political speeches, for example.

Example

Statement	I have called you five times!
Objective level	I wanted to speak with you.
Self-revelation level	I need you. I'm lonely.
Level of relating to others	You neglect me.
Appeal level	I'll worry about myself.

Similarly, the person addressed can hear the message differently; the four-ears model:

Factual ear

How am I to understand peculiarities of the facts?



Self-revelation ear

What do I hear in respect of the personal peculiarities of the person I am addressing? What are this person's feelings and moods?

Interactive ear

What holds the interest of the person before me? How does this person view our relationship?

Appeal ear

What does the person I am addressing expect from me? What should I do, think and feel?

The messages conveyed are thus understood by the person addressed on different levels. The person has the free choice of which ear receives and interprets the message conveyed. This depends, for example, upon previous experiences, attitudes, expectations, fears and fantasy.

Communication becomes difficult when the person speaking and the person addressed are

attuned to different levels. What we say is often understood differently than we think by the person we are addressing. Everything we say is filtered and modified by the person addressed. We believe that what we hear and perceive is the only truth. In fact, though, there are several realities. What we hear is not necessarily what the other person has said. We often hear only what fits to our own ideas.

One can improve communication by ensuring that what one perceives and views as the truth was also intended in the same way by the other person: I assume you mean....; Do you mean...?. Is that correct?

4 Appreciative language

Recognition and appreciation motivate a person, bolster his or her self-esteem and improve this person's communicative abilities. The absence of recognition and appreciation demotivates the person addressed and results in resignation, anger, fear and refusal to cooperate. Appreciative language prevents irritating, hurting and angering others.

Recognition and appreciation are expressed in one's inner attitudes and not merely in appreciative language. A positive attitude in relation to the person addressed is also expressed by an appreciative form of speaking. The opposite is also true: The persons you are addressing can react very sensitively to derogatory and belittling words about behaviour, thoughts and ideas.

Example of belittling and appreciative language:

Belittling language	Appreciative language
If you don't listen correctly, then of course you won't understand anything.	Please help me. What exactly is still not clear about the matter?
Good heavens! That is certainly not the right way!	I have certain reservations about this proposal. Allow me to explain these briefly, perhaps these are unfounded.
I can't believe that you're still working on this job.	We had planned seven days for this job. Could you please give me a short report on the status of this work?

Source: Doris Ternes: Kommunikation - eine Schlüsselqualifikation (Communication – A Key Qualification), p. 67

5 Active listening

Active listening is a method of conducting discussions based on the appreciation and interest of the other person and the readiness to listen. Active listening enables open communication. Active listening is practised to ensure that the person addressed understands the information presented as intended. Active listening is a technique by which the person addressed receives active feedback and is encouraged to continue discussing the matter of interest.

The three steps of active listening

- Listening
- Understanding
- Feelings

Activity	Levels	Four-ears model
Visual contact, nodding, sounds like mm, aha, yes.	Listening	The interactive ear is addressed.
I summarise what I hear in my own words in order to be certain that I have correctly understand the facts.	Understanding	The factual ear is addressed (analysis of content).
I attempt to understand the feelings and requirements of the other person and to reflect my impressions.	Feelings	The self-revelation or appeal ear is addressed (analysis of feelings and wishes).

After D. Ternes, Kommunikation - eine Schlüsselqualifikation (Communication – A Key Qualification)

Active listening techniques


- Listening: This first step can be described as passive listening and consists of such elements as visual contact, nodding approval and sounds like mm, aha, yes?
- Understanding – paraphrasing: The second step of active listening calls upon the technique of paraphrasing. Paraphrasing means summarising the arguments of the other person in your own words; that is, repeating the sense of what has been said and not the words verbatim in order to be certain that I have correctly understood the content. Typical questions are: Have I understood correctly that... or If I may briefly summarise, you then think...
- Feelings – verbalising: Verbalising means repeating the message of the other person at the feeling level and further clarifying a point of discussion by asking a question relating to feelings or perceptions.

Typical examples:

Possible underlying feelings	Verbalisation technique
Anger	You appear to be angered by Ms. XY, or do I have the wrong impression?
Resignation, sadness	Do you feel that your work is not being taken seriously?
Anger, enragement	Do you have the impression that the work load is not correctly distributed?

After D. Ternes, Kommunikation - eine Schlüsselqualifikation (Communication – A Key Qualification)

Subsequent questions



Active listening also includes asking questions. This allows the other person to clarify uncertain points. Example: I haven't understood you completely. Could you please explain your problem with Ms. XY more exactly? Sometimes a simple expression such as: Indeed? Really? is sufficient to encourage the other person to go into greater detail.

Negative example: In the heated discussion one no longer hears other persons, because one is occupied looking for counter-arguments. The person addressed feels that he or she is not taken seriously, is angered, and a good discussion with positive results no longer comes about.

6 The feedback method


Feedback is one of the most effective ways of learning more about ourselves. It has been said that the last thing we learn about ourselves is the effect we have on others. Constructive feedback increases self-awareness, offers options and encourages self-development so it can be important to learn to give and receive it. Constructive feedback can contain both positive and negative feedback and it is therefore important to learn to give feedback skilfully.

The feedback method is a technique for describing how you perceive, understand and respond to the behaviour of the person addressed to this person. The feedback method:

- trains self-perception (self-perception and how others see us are often not the same)
- improves the communication skills and capability for cooperation of the individual
- reinforces positive behaviour and corrects negative behaviour.

Giving feedback

- Be clear about what you want to say in advance, practice if necessary. If you are not absolutely clear about what it is you're going to say it is easy to forget the main message or deliver a confused message.
- It is important to explain the purpose of what you are about to say so the recipient understands that you are not simply making gratuitous comments. This will also enable them to understand that feedback is a two-way process and that they have a right to respond.
- Encourage self-assessment. It can be very helpful if you can encourage an individual, through using gentle probing questions to identify a pattern of behaviour for themselves rather than by telling them. This can cut down your hard work and also means the individual is more likely to commit to change as they feel they have ownership of the problem.
- Use the positive/negative sandwich. Most people need encouragement, to be told when they are doing something well. When offering feedback it can really help the receiver to hear first what you like about them or what they have done well. If the positive registers first, negatives are more likely to be listened to and acted up.
- Be specific. Avoid general comments which are not useful when it comes to



development. Be descriptive rather than evaluative. Give the person specific examples of what you saw or heard and the effect it had on you, rather than merely saying something was 'good or bad', etc.

- Limit yourself to only a few points and do not present too much at once.
- Offer alternatives. If you do offer negative feedback then do not simply criticise, suggest what the person could have done differently, give a positive suggestion. If there is no possibility for changing (e.g. stuttering), make no reference to this.
- It can be easy to say to the other person "You are....," suggesting that you are offering a universally agreed opinion about that person. Beginning the feedback with "I think...." or "In my opinion...." is a way of avoiding the impression that we are telling the person a "universally agreed judgement" about themselves.
- Leave the recipient with a choice about whether to act or not.
- Recap on good points. End on a cheerful note by reminding the recipient that it's not all bad!

Receiving feedback

If you are on the receiving end of feedback you can help yourself by:

- Listening to the feedback rather than immediately reacting or arguing with it. Feedback may be uncomfortable to hear, but we may be poorer without it. People may think things without telling us and then we may be at a disadvantage. Remember that people do have their opinion about you and will have their perceptions of your behaviour, and it can help to be aware of those. However, do remember that you are also entitled to your opinion and you may choose to ignore it as being of little significance, irrelevant or referring to behaviour which you wish to maintain.
- Being clear about what is being said. Avoid jumping to conclusions or becoming immediately defensive. If you do people may cut down their feedback or you may not be able to use it fully. Make sure you understand the feedback before you respond to it. A useful technique can be to paraphrase or repeat the criticism to check that you have understood it.
- Checking it out with others rather than relying on only one source. If we rely on one source then we may imagine that the individual's opinion is shared by everybody.
- Asking for feedback you want but don't get. Sometimes we do get feedback but it is restricted to one aspect of our behaviour and we may have to request feedback we would find useful but do not get.
- Deciding what you will do as a result of the feedback. When we receive it we can assess its value, the consequences of ignoring or using it, and finally decide what we will do as a result of it. If we do not take decisions on the basis of it then it is wasted.
- Finally thank the person for giving the feedback. We might benefit from it, it may not have been easy for the person to give, and it is a valuable practice to reinforce in any organisation or relationship.

'I' messages versus 'You' messages

These messages are fundamentally different for expressing criticism. 'You' messages generate defence, opposition, anger, justification. 'I' messages generate concern, reflection and readiness for clarification. 'I' messages can prevent impending conflicts.

Examples of You messages	Examples of I messages
You must always..	I notice that..
Why don't you...	I wish that...
Then you should...	It annoys me that..

Constructive criticism

Rules for constructive criticism:

- Describe the situation from your own point of view. For example: I notice that..
- Describe your own reaction. For example: Due to the interruption of instruction I have lost the thread...
- Describe your own feelings. For example: I feel uncertain or it annoys me when I....
- Formulate your own wishes and expectations. For example: Please let me finish what I'm saying first.
- State facts and not mere assumptions.
- Argue in terms of facts and not by emotional attacks.
- Actively listen to the other person in order to clarify this person's point of view.
- Do not draw comparisons with other persons.
- Conclude the discussions on a positive note: Either conclude an agreement or thank the other person for frank discussions.

7 Questioning techniques

Questions are of fundamental importance for conducting discussions. They are a way of influencing discussions in the desired direction. Good discussions are characterised by a proper balance between questions and pursuing points voiced by the person addressed.

Whoever asks controls the discussion. One can guide discussions in the desired direction using appropriate forms of questions. Caution: Use questions cautiously, so that the person addressed does not feel deluged with questions or even feel manipulated. Questions signal that we are interested in a certain subject and therefore in the concerns of the person addressed. Questions vitalise communication. Questions break through barriers and frequently pave the way to the successful conclusion of discussions.

Forms of questioning

One distinguishes between two basic forms of questioning, referred to as closed and open questions:

- Closed questions: Also called decision questions. They keep a discussion short,

demanding a brief answer, often yes or no. They are advantageous when speaking with excessively talkative persons. Important for explicit decisions. Disadvantage: Only limited information is communicated and no background information. The person addressed has no possibility for explanations.

- Open questions: Questions which begin with How?, Why?, What?, etc. Cannot be answered with yes or no. Open questions are preferable when detailed answers are required. Allow the person addressed greater flexibility for answering. Encourage further thought about the matter in question. Are better suited to dialog amongst partners, not as in a cross-examination. Open questions are better suited for the analysis of problems which must be solved. More time-consuming, as the partners discuss matters in greater detail.

Examples of open and closed questions

	Closed question	Open question
Question	Were you at the energy trade fair yesterday?	What was your impression of the energy trade fair?
Answer	yes or no	It was very informative for me. It dealt with the following subjects...
Question	Are you interested in discussing this?	How can I interest you in discussing this?
	Surely you would like a solution?	What is the solution that you?

After D. Ternes, Kommunikation - eine Schlüsselqualifikation (Communication – A Key Qualification), p. 74

8 Handling criticism

Most people regard criticism as negative, although criticism can be advanced in both a positive and a negative sense. One experiences criticism as an attack against oneself and as derogatory. The weaker the self-esteem, the more harshly one then reacts. On the other hand, many people find it difficult to criticise others.

Criticism that I receive is, first of all, an expression of the other person's opinion. It is subjective and frequently contains a message about others, such as what they dislike, what they are lacking, etc. It is a matter of being sensitive to the verbal and, above all, the non-verbal signals of the other person and recognising when this person expresses anger, restraint, indisposition, etc. These are frequently communicated by body language: the gaze wanders off, attention is lost, signals such as tapping with the toes, drumming with the fingers, etc.

Forms of criticism

Direct criticism expresses itself in the form of

- Accusations: You're impossible....
- Nagging: You always do it that way...
- Second-hand criticism: That's what they all say...

Indirect criticism

- Sarcasm: Na, you managed that again somehow, didn't you?
- Unwanted assistance: I'll do that for you.
- Critical stance: That film was really stupid.
- Praising a third person: Now look at Jutta. She does that very well..

Reactions to and handling of criticism

Listen attentively and determine what the actual problem is. Determine the level on which the problem exists (emotional, factual, relating to the other person?). Do not defend yourself or justify your actions. Encourage the person to frankly express his or her reservations and reasons for criticism. Accept criticism, demonstrate your understanding and include the arguments of the person. Take the wind out of the sails of the person criticising: I understand that this angers you. How can I help you?

Helpful formulations for constructive criticism

- When I speak with you I have the feeling...
- I'd like to explain my position on this matter...
- From my point of view I see that somewhat differently..
- Please don't be offended, but I see it this way....

9 Handling conflicts

Conflicts are disturbances which interrupt the course of discussions. Conflicts go beyond mere differences of opinion. Two or more parties, with different intentions in their negotiations, are always involved. Strong emotions, such as anger, rage, or revenge, are at the focus. These result in un-reflected behaviour and actions, expressions of rage and verbal attacks. Unresolved conflicts escalate. It is therefore necessary to intervene early on and act to defuse them.

Backgrounds of conflicts

- Different interests and requirements of the conflicting parties, such as feelings of recognition, envy or fear of loss.
- Personal problems, such as neurotic disturbances, fears, having a bad day, dissatisfaction with oneself, overburdening, or helplessness.
- Communication problems, such as misunderstandings, incorrectly interpreted signals, etc.
- Differently informed persons, different states of knowledge of the facts.
- Values are different: Limitation of freedom in the interest of maintaining order.
- Structural conditions, such as hierarchies and laws (traffic violations versus traffic rules).

Conflict signals

- Aggressiveness and hostility, such as verbal attacks and malicious glances.
- Disinterest: The other person is no longer listening, goes away or ignores your presentation.
- Rejection and resistance: constantly contradicts your presentation, unwilling to speak with you.
- Hand/arm gestures are small and close to the body or arms are crossed in front of the body. Body can be physically turned away from you.
- Facial expressions are minimal. Eyes maintain little contact, or are downcast.
- Escape: avoids contact, denies availability.
- Exaggerated adaptive behaviour: false friendliness

By picking up these signs, you can change what you say or how you say it to help the other person become more at ease, and more receptive to what you are saying. Equally, if you are feeling somewhat defensive going into a negotiating situation, you can monitor your own body language to ensure that the messages you are conveying are ones that say that you are open and receptive to what is being discussed.

As a consequence of conflicts, a stress situation arises. The capacity to assimilate information is seriously limited. We hear only what conforms to our picture. Our understanding is blocked and we no longer correctly perceive our environment (e.g. black-and-white thinking, friend-enemy thinking). Emotions such as rage, fear and mistrust dominate. One's own threatened interests and requirements are paramount. The requirements of others no longer have any meaning and we are incapable of making contact. The possibilities for negotiating are limited.

Whoever wishes to deal constructively with conflict situations must be aware of his or her own reaction patterns. One should know how to react in conflict situations – whether one tends to attack, sooner withdraws or prefers to avoid conflict situations. Only one who understands his or her own behaviour can distance himself or herself from the conflict and remain able to negotiate.

Negotiating is possible only when one has built up inner stability and is fully in control of one's own psyche. It is therefore sometimes useful to interrupt the discussions and resume them at a later time. For the power-saving check a colleague should take over the discussions if these become too difficult.

Methods for the de-escalation of conflicts

Observe the following principles:

- Allow the other person to speak and do not intervene before the other person has finished.
- Do not counter accusations and charges with other accusations.
- Ask further to determine whether the other person has correctly understood you.
- Maintain visual contact.
- Do not demonstrate arrogance by your body language. For example, do not turn away,

laugh derogatorily, raise your eyebrows, etc.

- As long as possible, ignore attacks and do not react to these.
- Do not react with threats and accusations.
- Do not allow yourself to be swept up in the dynamics of the conflict. power games and harsh verbal exchanges produce only losers and no winners.
- It is useless to search endlessly for the causes of a problem. It is better to concentrate on the solution to the problem.
- Questions like: What will help us further? take the person addressed seriously and contribute to the commitment to solve the problem.

10 Do's and don'ts in communication

Do's of communication

Do – typical discussion promoters	Expressions (examples)
Open questions	How do you see this?
Questions in response	What do you mean by maybe?
Targeted questions	How can we improve the situation?
Signalling attentiveness	Visual contact, sounds like ah, mm, or nodding
Summarising	So you mean....
Clarifying, emphasising the essential point	If I understand you correctly, this is a matter of....
Working towards wishes	So you're interested in..... You would very much like....
Address emotions	You're disappointed.. Do you feel ignored?
Addressing I messages / constructively addressing conflicts	You have already interrupted me three times. This annoys me, because I then lose the thread.
Addressing by name	Yes, Mister Maier..
Positive formulations	Yes, with pleasure, very well...
Signalling understanding	I can well understand that..
Signalling binding commitment	I'll take care of this immediately.

Don'ts of communication

Don'ts – discussion destroyers	Expressions (examples)
You messages	In any case you would have...
Irritating formulations	That's not my responsibility.
Playing down/bagatelling	That's not so bad.
Interrogating/accusing	Why didn't you contact me earlier?

Insinuations	You're only angry because...
Failing to respond to emotions	Please stick to the facts. Why are you so angry?
Assessing/judging	You're thinking false. We can't continue like this.
Commanding	I expect that you will..... Do it this way.
Instructing	I already explained this to you earlier.
Warning/threatening	I would consider that very carefully. Think about the consequences.
Worldly wisdoms	No pain, no gain..
Irony/sarcasm	Well, what do you suggest then?
Killer phrases	We've always done it this way.
Softeners	Somehow, actually, could, would, perhaps, possibly, under certain conditions.

11 Preparing yourself

Going about your work professionally includes giving attention to preparing yourself. Preparing yourself well, presenting yourself in a positive light and leaving a good impression is a matter of showing respect for other persons.

Preparing for a visit / meeting


- Before a visit check to make certain that your advisory case is complete.
- Are all parts required for the advisory discussions there?
- Is my laptop functioning (accumulator charged)?
- Are all measuring instruments functioning?
- Make certain that you arrive punctually for the agreed meeting.
- Take account of travel times and routes. Study train schedules, city maps, etc.

Clothing

- You should feel comfortable in your clothing.
- Clothing should be clean, neat and orderly.
- Clothing should be appropriate for the situation. Not only sloppy clothing, but also exaggerated clothing causes uneasiness. In case of doubt, clothing should sooner be decent. Super-minis and plunging necklines are out of place.
- Jewellery and accessories should fit to the overall image.
- Makeup and perfume should be decent and not exaggerated.

Posture

- Not too stiff, but not too careless. If you move about in a stiff posture, you give the impression of being unapproachable. Good posture improves the impression you make.



Sit and stand straight, keep your shoulders back and your chest up. A careless posture signals superficiality.

- An open sitting posture demonstrates interest (do not cross your arms).
- Maintain a friendly facial expression and smile occasionally. Maintain visual contact as this shows a person's confidence level.
- Gestures: movements of the hands in support of the verbal presentation reinforce your words. However, excessive gestures can detract from the presentation and harm concentration. Avoid excessive movement during a sitting interaction
- Respect the "personal space" of people and do not enter it. If you have to move a little bit closer to another person, ask first if you may do so.

Manner of speaking

- Speak clearly, understandably, freely and calmly.
- An exaggerated choice of words or the use of many specialised terms creates mistrust and restraint. This can give the person you are talking to the impression of being persuaded and not advised.
- Do not use slang expressions or strong language. These irritate people and give the impression of incompetence.

If you want to convey a certain message with body language, here are some body language tools:

- Friendliness: smiling, nodding, a warm handshake, softened eye expression, steady eye contact, standing face-on to the other person
- Calm: measured breathing, smooth, synchronized body movements, lowered shoulders, not tensed or hunched, no fiddling, sitting back in your seat
- Confidence: steady eye contact, upright posture, open gestures, a relaxed facial expression, a smile that is open and genuine

12 Behaviour in households

The home, which is the private sphere of people, is a sensible area. One should not reveal personal information to third persons and ensure that other persons are not given such information.

A friendly and open approach is most likely to win over the person. Treat the people just as you would wish to be treated:

- Introduce yourself with your full name.
- Offer your hand and shake hands heartily.
- Maintain visual contact with the other person.
- Enter and sit down only after being told.
- You may accept something to drink, with the exception of alcohol.
- Engage in small talk to establish the atmosphere for discussions (weather, flat, travel

route, etc. – whatever appears to be appropriate)

- Transition to advisory discussions: Inform the person exactly about the procedure you will follow.
- When necessary to enter other rooms always ask permission.
- When making measurements, explain why these are necessary.
- When installing energy-saving lamps, attaching multi-socket outlets, installing water aerators, etc. always explain the function and the reason for installing.
- At the end of the advisory discussions and actions speak about the further procedure.
- Leave your telephone number or business card in case the person has questions.
- Politely thank the person and leave.

Behaviour in households with different cultural backgrounds

While performing visits you will also visit families from a different cultural background. In order to enter into conversation easily and avoid misunderstandings it is important to be aware of one's own prejudices and to be informed about the cultural circumstances of immigrant persons.

People are different. On the one hand, this enriches our lives. However, it also poses difficulties. People have prejudices against others and also against people from other countries, whose cultures and patterns of behaviour with which we are not familiar and which we do not understand. As already mentioned in the section Perception, we tend to recognise our perception as the only reality and attempt to project our norms and values onto others. People tend to judge others who are similar to themselves positively and, conversely, what we do not know negatively. Moreover, there may also be difficulties in communication due to different mother tongues.

In order to understand people from another cultural background it is important to be aware of and find out about the values and norms of these persons. Misunderstandings can be avoided when one is able to place himself or herself in the position of the other person and learn to deal with different environments.

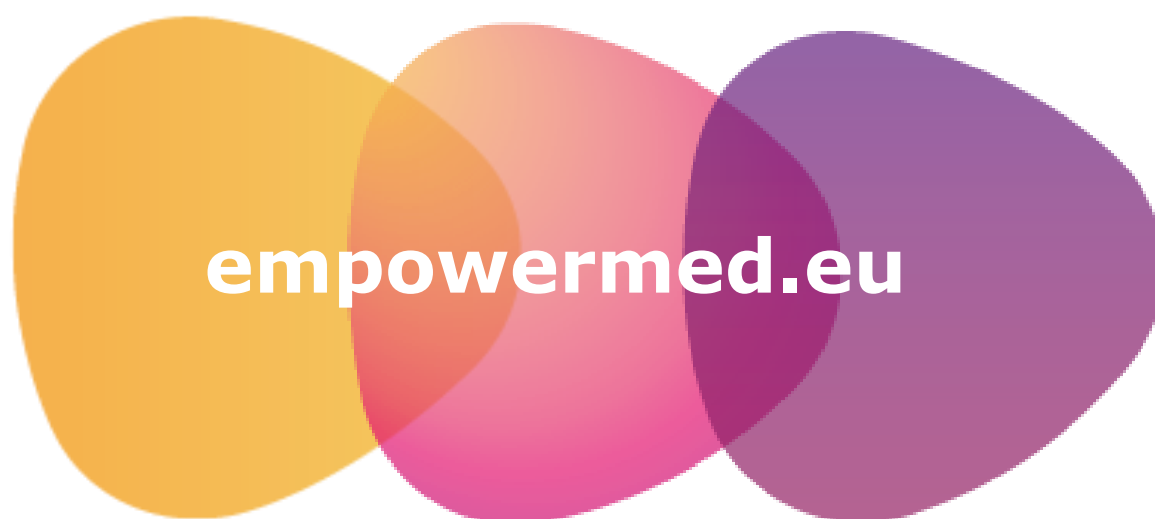
For behaviour in the household this means in particular:


- Respecting the customs and habits of other cultures. For example, if it is normal to leave one's shoes in the hallway you should respect this and take off your shoes.
- If you are unsure how to behave, simply ask what is normal in the family. This gains the respect and sympathy of the other person and avoids immediate reservations on the part of the other person.



Literature

This document is based on document Communication training by Caritas Schwarzwald-Gäu, Hanns-Klemm-Str. 1A, D-71034 Böblingen, Germany, and it has been adjusted for the needs of EmpowerMed project.





Approaching and communicating with households affected by energy poverty

Training Module

2020 - WECF



EmpowerMed

Approaching households - good to know

- Households do not necessarily want to be approached
- Fear of losing social, financial or other support
- Fear of stigmatisation
- Low level of trust towards various institutions or ,door-to-door salesmen‘
- Distrustfulness can remain present throughout the work with the households, but at the end they tend to be satisfied
- Solutions:
 - work with actors that already have trust of households, such as social workers (without commercial interest)
 - use existing networks that have trust of households (pensioner’s associations, local social clubs...)
 - word of mouth



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Forms of communication

- There are three forms of communication:
 - Verbal: refers to all elements of speech (words, letters, sentences and numbers)
 - Para-linguistic: refers to manner in which we speak (intonation, speaking rate, pauses, laughing, singing)
 - Non-verbal: body language (posture, gesture and facial expressions) and external attributes (clothes)
- The effects of the messages we communicate consist of
 - 55 % body language
 - 38 % verbal capabilities
 - 7 % choice of words
- Confusion arises when our body language communicates something different than the spoken word



The role of women in households

- Women tend to have more responsibilities managing the household, e.g. cooking, parenting, cleaning and other care work, due to sexual division of labour.
- Energy poverty (although not formally defined) disproportionately affects women!
- 85% of all single-parent households are headed by women.
- During household visits it might be more likely to encounter women and not men
- Due to social roles and social pressures, some women might be less confident to speak up and say their opinion, particularly in an unfamiliar situation or when encountering a stranger. Some women (and men) might also laugh when they feel uncomfortable.
- When people who fit into multiple minority categories (e.g. a young single mother with a disability) experience discrimination, some of the protective mechanisms put in place by our society often fail to meet the needs associated with the multifaceted nature of their

Identities



What is Intersectionality?

Intersectionality can be seen as a tool that helps to analyse and understand the different factors by which each person is shaped (e.g. race, gender, age, ethnicity, physical ability, class) and therefore may face multiple types of overlapping discrimination depending on their race, gender etc. (Collins and Budge, 2016)

- Gender?
 - Socio-economic factors (low education / income)
 - Age, e.g. pensioners, students, children
 - Special health conditions, e.g. disabled persons
 - Migration background, ethnicity
- may exacerbate existing inequality,
e.g. energy poverty



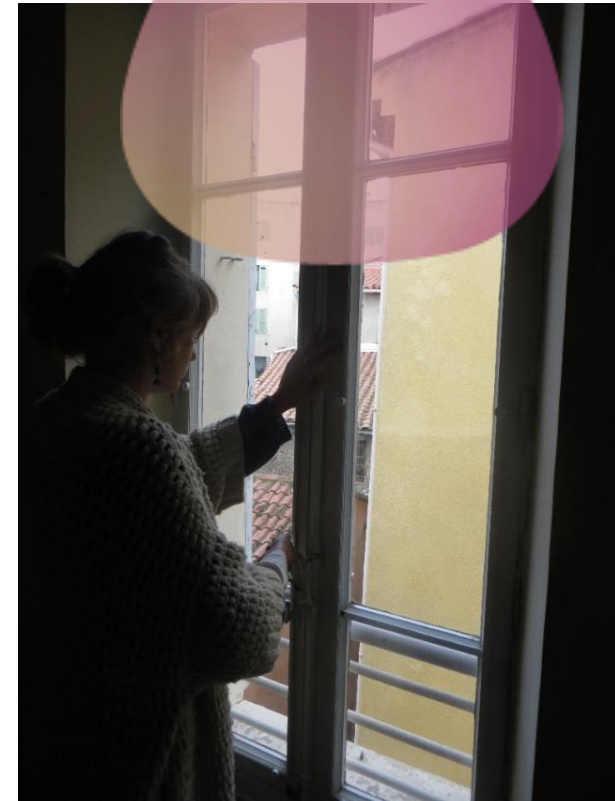
Tips on how to approach from a gender perspective

- Be aware of gender and intersectional differences when it comes to energy access, consumption and preferences in order to reach more people and achieve more sustainable & efficient project results
- Due to socialisation many women react more strongly to emotions and social aspects than to purely technical data → React to small gestures like nodding by asking twice
- The visiting team should consist of a male and a female consultant
- Invite all members (especially women) of the household to participate in the conversation. It might make it easier for women to engage if they are being invited directly
- Be aware of myths or stereotypes: e.g. if we say that women do not speak their mind, then this might indicate that they mean 'yes' when they say 'no' or vice versa and might be seen as an opportunity to push a woman to do something she might not want to
- Bring leaflets etc. so that the persons in the household can think about the project on their own in a relaxed atmosphere compared to a stress situation when someone comes to their home
- shy and self-conscious men?



Code of ethical principles in social care

- Respect of human dignity and uniqueness
- Energy advisers must:
 - Protect people's dignity, privacy, autonomy and individuality of households
 - Respect people's culture and values
 - Strive to use understandable language and level of communication
 - Protect the confidential data and talk respectfully about them in their absence



General behaviour and language

- Friendly and open behavior
- Treat person(s) just as you would wish to be treated
- Maintain visual contact with the other person(s)
- Patience in answering questions
- Appropriate choice of words
- Complete sentences
- Communication in 'advisory capacity'
- Explaining and demonstrating, use examples
- Address and include women and men in the same way



Appreciative language

- The absence of recognition and appreciation demotivates the person addressed and results in resignation, anger, fear and refusal to cooperate
- Recognition and appreciation are expressed in one's inner attitudes and not merely in appreciative language

Belittling language	Appreciative language
If you don't listen correctly, then of course you won't understand anything.	Please help me. What exactly is still not clear about the matter?
Good heavens! That is certainly not the right way!	I have certain reservations about this proposal. Allow me to explain these briefly, perhaps these are unfounded.



Active listening

Activity	Levels
Visual contact, nodding, sounds like mm, aha, yes.	Listening
I summarise what I hear in my own words in order to be certain that I have correctly understand the facts.	Understanding
I attempt to understand the feelings and requirements of the other person and to reflect my impressions.	Feelings



Feedback

Rules for giving feedback:

- Do not generalise and speak only in the first person: "I think..., I've understood..."
- Do not assess (good or bad...)
- Feedback means not only discussing negative responses, but also reinforcing positive responses
- Do not interpret and generalise. Describe only what is outwardly visible and indicate your own reactions or feelings
- Give concrete feedback that allows the person addressed to change behaviour
- Choose clear and precise formulations

Rules for receiving feedback:

- Listen and digest. Think about what has been said!
- Do not defend yourself, reject, explain or "shoot back"
- Consider what is correct and what can help further
- However, one must not accept everything which the other person says



I messages versus You messages

- Fundamentally different for expressing criticism
- You messages generate defence, opposition, anger, justification
- I messages generate concern, reflection and readiness for clarification

Examples of You messages	Example of I messages
You must always..	I notice that..
Why don't you...	I wish that...
Then you should...	It annoys me that..



Forms of questioning

Closed questions

- Demand a brief answer, often yes or no
- Advantageous when speaking with excessively talkative persons
- Important for explicit decisions

Open questions

- Cannot be answered with yes or no
- Open questions are preferable when detailed answers are required
- Allow the person addressed greater flexibility for answering
- Encourage further thought about the matter in question

	Closed question	Open question
Question	Were you at the energy trade fair yesterday?	What was your impression of the energy trade fair?
Answer	yes or no	It was very informative for me. It dealt with the following subjects...



Do's of communication

Do – typical discussion promoters	Expressions (examples)
Open questions	How do you see this?
Questions in response	What do you mean by maybe?
Targeted questions	How can we improve the situation?
Signalling attentiveness	Visual contact, sounds like ah, mm, or nodding
Summarising	So you mean....
Clarifying, emphasising the essential point	If I understand you correctly, this is a matter of....
Working towards wishes	So you're interested in...
Address emotions	You're disappointed... Do you feel ignored?
Addressing I messages / constructively addressing conflicts	You have already interrupted me three times. This annoys me, because I then lose the thread.
Addressing by name	Yes, Mister Maier...
Positive formulations	Yes, with pleasure, very well...
Signalling understanding	I can well understand that..
Signalling binding commitment	I'll take care of this immediately.



Do not's of communication

Don'ts – discussion destroyers	Expressions (examples)
You messages	In any case you would have...
Irritating formulations	That's not my responsibility.
Playing down/bagatelling	That's not so bad.
Interrogating/accusing	Why didn't you contact me earlier?
Insinuations	You're only angry because...
Failing to respond to emotions	Please stick to the facts. Why are you so angry?
Assessing/judging	You're thinking false. We can't continue like this.
Commanding	I expect that you will... Do it this way.
Instructing	I already explained this to you earlier.
Warning/threatening	Think about the consequences.
Worldly wisdoms	No pain, no gain.
Irony/sarcasm	Well, what do you suggest then?
Killer phrases	We've always done it this way.
Softeners	Somehow, actually, could, would, perhaps, possibly, under certain conditions.



Clothing

- You should feel comfortable in your clothing
- Clothing should be clean, neat and orderly
- Clothing should be appropriate for the situation
- In case of doubt, clothing should sooner be decent
- Jewellery and accessories should fit to the overall image
- Makeup and/or perfume should be decent and not exaggerated



Posture

- Not too stiff, but not too careless. If you move about in a stiff posture, you give the impression of being unapproachable. A careless posture signals superficiality.
- An open sitting posture demonstrates interest (do not cross your arms)
- Maintain a friendly facial expression and smile occasionally
- Maintain visual contact
- Gestures: movements of the hands in support of the verbal presentation reinforce your words. However, excessive gestures can detract from the presentation and harm concentration
- While considering the points above to find a posture that is professional it also needs to feel natural too so you are authentic



Manner of speaking

- Speak clearly, understandably, freely and calmly
- An exaggerated choice of words or the use of expert terminology creates mistrust and restraint. This can give the person the impression of being persuaded and not advised.
- Do not use slang expressions or strong language. These irritate the person and give the impression of incompetence. However, if possible, it is good to try to slightly adjust one's own speaking style to the style of the person(s) you are talking to. This helps to 'fit in' and creates trust. This being said, sometimes casual language is better than business language because 'similar' people seem more approachable / likeable. This also reduces hierarchies and the shame of not being knowledgeable on this topic.



My home is my castle

The energy advisor should:

- Be aware that she is in someone else's home, therefore it is necessary to behave appropriately
- Maximum two persons/advisers
- Check for legal framework
- Use polite and respectful forms of greeting and departing, not slang or too casual
- Have a friendly and open approach
- Proceed in the way as the household member would want to be treated



After ringing the doorbell

The advisor should:

- Step back at least one step
- Introduce herself with full name and surname
- Offer her hand – handshake should be firm and hard, as in this way we express positive intentions
- Ritual of greeting includes a smile
- Keep eye contact – when meeting other people our eyes are speaking
- Enter the dwelling and be seated only when invited
- Allow the resident person to go ahead



Behaviour in the household

- In the introduction establish a comfortable atmosphere with chatting
- When starting with the 'advising', explain procedures and the objectives of advising; announce what is to be done
- Request person's approval when entering other rooms
- When doing measurements, explain what is going on
- In the end of the first visit, notify the person of the next visit
- Request the persons's approval before installing immediate aids
- When installing saving devices, explain its function and how it is used and request approval for installation
- When finishing 'advising', explain further procedure
- Leave contact information so the person can call if needed



Behaviour in households with different cultural backgrounds

- Likely to visit families from a different cultural background
- Be aware of one's own prejudices and be informed about the cultural circumstances of the households
- People have prejudices against others and also against people from other countries, whose cultures and patterns of behaviour with which we are not familiar and which we do not understand.
- There may also be difficulties in communication due to different mother tongues
- In order to understand people from another cultural background it is important to be aware of and find out about their values and norms
- Respect the customs and habits of other cultures (e.g. if it is normal to leave one's shoes in the hallway you should respect this and take off your shoes)
- If you are unsure how to behave, simply ask what is normal - this gains the respect and sympathy of the other person and avoids immediate reservations on the part of the other person



Overview of the phases of visit

Discussion phase	What is to be done	Goal
Greeting and introduction	Greet the person, arrange a date for visiting the household, small talk (weather, attractive flat, etc.)	Ensure a good atmosphere for discussions
Transition to the advisory phase	Explain the purpose of the advisory session exactly, in particular explain the procedure for the flat Work out arguments and advantages for the person	Inform the person, create assurance so that the person knows what he or she is facing
Advisory phase	Explain in detail what will be done and why Explain the device functions exactly When entering other rooms always ask permission Do not break off communication, ask questions, determine the nature of the problem Do not be overzealous and attempt to persuade the person, use convincing arguments Find a solution that takes account of the people's wishes	Assurance for the person Build up trust
In case of problems	Respect Find an acceptable solution for all Always recognise the person's requirements	
Concluding phase	Summarise the results of the advisory session Discuss how to proceed further, clarify open questions Leave your telephone number Arrange a date for another visit Politely thank the person and leave	Clarify how to proceed further



Handling criticism

- Listen attentively and determine what the actual problem is
- Do not defend yourself or justify your actions
- Encourage the person to frankly express his or her reservations and reasons for criticism
- Accept criticism, demonstrate your understanding and include the arguments of the person
- Take the wind out of the sails of the person criticising: I understand that this angers you. How can I help you?
- Helpful formulations for constructive criticism
 - When I speak with you I have the feeling...
 - I would very much like that
 - When you say that I feel.....
 - Please don't be offended, but I see it this way....
 - What would be your proposal?



Difficult situations and conflicts

- Unresolved conflicts escalate. It is therefore necessary to intervene early on and act to defuse them.
- Conflict signals
 - Aggressiveness and hostility, such as verbal attacks and malicious glances
 - Disinterest: The other person is no longer listening, goes away or ignores your presentation
 - Rejection and resistance: constantly contradicts you, unwilling to speak with you
 - Escape: avoids contact, denies availability
 - Exaggerated adaptive behaviour: false friendliness
- Methods for the de-escalation of conflicts:
 - Allow the other person to speak and do not intervene before the other person has finished.
 - Do not counter accusations and charges with other accusations.
 - Ask further to determine whether the other person has correctly understood you.
 - Maintain visual contact.
 - Do not demonstrate arrogance by your body language (do not turn away, laugh derogatorily, raise your eyebrows...).
 - Do not react with threats and accusations.
 - Do not allow yourself to be swept up in the dynamics of the conflict.
 - Questions like: What will help you further? What do you suggest?
 - If after asking once what the person suggests or is not so happy about, the attacks / threats continue, ask the person if she or he would like the advisor to leave or speak with the advisor at another occasion.



When we cannot resolve the conflict

- Recognise the difference of opinions and admit that you might not be right or politely express that the person might not be right
- If a partner in discussion does not want to continue the conversation and expresses the wish to finish the conversation this needs to be respected at all times.
- You should stop advising and either agree for a visit on another day or agree not to continue it anymore



THANK YOU !



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