

Making Every Contact Count

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Communication Skills:

Sending Signals

All levels of intervention need good communication skills to be effective. Start by thinking about the signals that you give out when you approach a person, even before you start your chat for change. The person will be subconsciously picking up signals from you and this will influence whether they feel they want to chat with you or not.



What signals are you sending out?

- Are you smiling?
- Are you adopting an open stance (arms relaxed by your side, or lightly resting your hands in your lap, legs uncrossed)?
- Are you keeping good eye contact?
- Are you using a gentle tone of voice?
- Are you at about arms length from the person?
- Are you at the same level as the person (i.e. sitting or standing)?
- Be approachable, curious, interested and helpful. Working in a health role, you are a **credible messenger**.

Use Open Questions

"What support do you think you need to quit smoking?"

"What are the benefits of keeping active for you personally?"

Use Reflections

Reflections mirror back the content of what has been said, or the feelings that are inherent in what has been expressed. Remember, if you are reflecting a feeling it is always a guess, so check out that your assumption is correct.

Reflect back – Check back

Reflections help you to demonstrate empathy and roll with resistance. See the example below:

Patient: *"I suppose you're going to have a go at me for being a smoker."*

You: *"It sounds like you're feeling a bit 'got at' for being a smoker, is that right?"*

You: *"I understand that a lot of professionals ask you about your smoking and this annoys you."*

Patient: *"Everybody keeps asking me if I want to lose weight. It makes me not want to even turn up!"*

You: *"Sounds like every time you come for an appointment you feel someone will mention your weight, and I'm guessing that you feel uncomfortable about this. Is that right?"*

Patient: *"Yes that's right."*

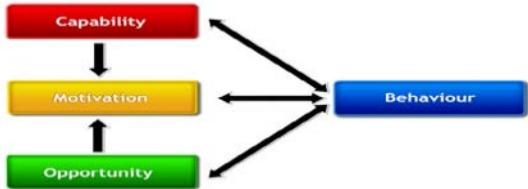
You: *"Okay, I understand that. It must feel very intrusive, I expect. I just want to ensure that all my patients have any information that they need, or know where to get support when they are thinking about change."*

A model for behaviour change

There are three key ingredients necessary for successful behaviour change.

The person needs to feel **capable** of changing, needs to have the **opportunity** to change, and of course needs to feel **motivated** to do so.

COM-B: A Model of Behaviour change



Ref: The Behaviour Change Wheel (Michie, 2014)

CAPABILITY: the physical strength, knowledge, skills etc needed to perform the behaviour; the ability to overcome barriers to performance.

For example, "Can I do it?"

"What will work for me?"

"Do I know how to do it?"

MOTIVATION: the person must be more highly motivated to do the behaviour at the relevant time than not to do the behaviour, or to engage in some competing behaviour.

For example, "Do I want to do it?"

"Is it important to me to do it?"

"What are the benefits for me of doing it?"

"Can I make a habit of doing it?"

OPPORTUNITY: there must be the opportunity for the behaviour to occur.

For example, "Can I afford to do it?"

"Where can I get help to do it?"

"Are there other people like me doing it?"

Although we are using brief advice, we can still make sure it is packed with 'good ingredients' which encourage **capability**, **opportunity** and **motivation**.

They include:

- giving personalised feedback of risk or consequences
- encouraging people to consider the benefits of change
- encouraging people to have a belief that they can succeed
- helping people to consider what support they need to change
- helping people to access services that will support them.

Desired Behaviours

The **new desired behaviours** we wish to encourage include:

- Do regular physical activity (30 minutes five times a week or 150 minutes per week)
- Achieve or maintain a healthy weight. Quit smoking with support from Stop Smoking Services



- Drink alcohol at lower risk levels (i.e. less than 3 units per day for women and less than 4 units for men)
- Have at least two alcohol free days per week
- Reduce stress by looking after your mental health and well-being, try the **Five Ways to Well-being**.

So let's examine Capability, Opportunity and Motivation to see how we can positively influence people in the context of these desired 'new behaviours'.

CAPABILITY

Capability involves knowledge, the psychological and physical capability to perform the new behaviour etc. Behaviour change techniques such as helping people to self-monitor what they do, to set goals and make plans to change can all help to increase capability.

"What support do you need?"

"What information would be of help to you?"

"What can you do as your first step?"

OPPORTUNITY

Ask questions which enquire about the opportunities the person has to do the behaviour. Encourage them to see that there are others like them also wishing to change. Help them to access local services.

"How do you feel about joining a walking group?"?

"Who is the best person to ask to support you with your new diet?"

"This is a great opportunity for you to get support from the local lifestyle services.....what are your thoughts about that?"

MOTIVATION

Encourage the person to see and feel the benefits associated with keeping physically active, losing weight or whatever. Help people to believe that change is possible, and that there will be pleasure associated with these changes. Help people to consider how they can make these new behaviours a habit.

"I'm sure you will do well, with a proper plan."

"Imagine how good you will feel when you haven't smoked for a week."

"You are 4 times more likely to successfully quit smoking if you get support from Stop Smoking Services."

"What do you think the benefits of keeping active are for you?"