



The way you speak is as important as what you say. When conveying information start with the most important points, pulling together related ideas, summarizing, and restating often. It is also important to clarify and elaborate by defining terms and using examples to clear up confusion and to reinforce main points.

Below are a few communication skills to have on hand when delivering Breathe Well, Live Well® to your clients.

Verbal Communication Tips

Listen Actively

Active listening means paying close attention to what the speaker is saying and feeling. State back in your own words your understanding of the sender's message and feelings. Respond to comments, reactions and questions in a way that expresses your interest, understanding and support.

Relay

Pass an idea from one member to another, back to the member or to the group. Some example questions might be:

- "Anne, how do you feel about John's statement?"
- "Jim, what do you think that means for you?"
- "Cheryl, what has your experience been so far?"

Read Body Language

Take cues from body language to understand messages from clients. For example, crossed arms may be an indicator of resistance or skepticism while tapping fingers may indicate boredom or anger.

Ways to make participants feel more comfortable

Ask Open-ended Questions

Probing questions are the foundation of adult learning. They encourage individuals to go deeper, to evaluate new information or concepts, to clarify issues and to develop solutions to problems. Use them liberally throughout the meetings. Ask questions such as:

- "What made you decide to come to the meeting today?"
- "What experiences have you had with that?"

Check for Understanding

Some examples of clarifying questions are:

- "Can you give me some examples of how this would apply to you?"
- "Tell me, in your own words, what you mean by this;" or
- "How do you think we should approach this situation? I need your help with this one."

Reinforce

Don't forget praise. It's the least expensive, most powerful leadership skill around. People are motivated to keep going when the group's leader or facilitator verbally confirms that they are "right on" or "on the right track."



Non-verbal Communication Tips

Your posture and facial expressions send an important message to the client and can set the tone of the session. Something as simple as smiling and a warm greeting tells the client that you are happy to be there.

Several of the tips below are written with the group education model in mind, however they can be useful when working with clients one-on-one.

Voice

Strive for a friendly tone that communicates patience, cooperation, flexibility and a willingness to hear questions and comments. If your tone of voice is impatient or reprimanding, it may spark resistance and resentment from the client.

Non-Verbal Cues

Use non-verbal cues such as a nod of your head, eye contact and attentive facial expressions to let the members know that you have heard them. This encourages them to continue.

Facial Expressions

People really “listen” to your face, so smile! If your face shows enthusiasm and openness, your client will most likely respond with interest and involvement.

Eye Contact

Maintain eye contact to connect with the client.

When working in a group setting, make sure you are making eye contact with all participants, and not talking to one side of the room or group of people more than the other.

Posture

A relaxed, confident posture sets a positive tone. Passive posture gives the impression that what you have to say is not important or credible. Rigid or domineering posture creates tension.