



## **Communication Skills Training: *Building Relationships with Clients***

### **Discussion Guide**

This communication skills training can be used for staff development in the area of building positive relationships with clients and among team members.. This guide is designed to help you use the ***Building Relationships with Clients*** training to enhance collaboration and team work and develop good relationship skills. Excellent communication and relationship skills provide a framework for ongoing work on your teams. Use this training as a cornerstone for the rest of the trainings.

As the discussion leader, you should review the entire training and print the *Presentation Handout* prior to using the training with your staff. The training takes approximately one hour to complete and provides one hour of continuing education credit. Once you view the training, you can choose to either use the entire training or only sections of it with your staff. To earn continuing education credit, each person in the group needs to watch the entire training and successfully complete the quiz (score  $\geq$  80%). Each person will be able to print a certificate at the end of the training. (See *Course Information Handout* for information.)

### **Staff Development in Cultural Awareness**

Section 1: This section is about four minutes long and shows an interaction between Jane, a health care provider, and Susan, a client. The section demonstrates the challenges presented when a client is disengaged and discouraged, and the provider is unclear how to address this resistance. As a group, describe similar experiences of disconnection between providers and clients.

1. Discuss situations in which cultural differences contribute to difficulties in relationship building.
2. How might these differences be addressed using the skills presented in this training? (Listening to self, nonverbal communication, verbal responses, readiness for change, open-ended questions, reflection and empathy)
3. Discuss situations in which different cultural groups require different approaches from a health care provider.

### **Practice Applying Relationship-Building Principles**

As the discussion leader, you may want to print the Presentation Handout so you can review the key points during your discussion. Show the following sections of the video to the group, then discuss the related questions.

#### **Section 2: Coaching**

#### **Section 3: Application of coaching by Jane with Susan**

#### **Section 4: Lecture**

#### **Section 5: Application of relationship-building skills with Jane and Don**

Think of a recent situation when you experienced frustration, feeling thwarted, and an overall lack of effective connection with a client/patient. What is your usual approach? How well does that approach work? Which of the approaches presented might work better? What can you imagine yourself actually doing?

### **Building Team Relationships**

1. Consider a situation in your setting in which relationship-building skills are not being used well.
2. Discuss how you can apply relationship-building skills to address your situation. For instance:
  - a. Consider how listening to yourself might identify what is not going well.
  - b. Identify nonverbal information that is evident in your interactions.
  - c. How ready for change do you believe your team is? How might you assist in the change process?
  - d. How might your verbal communication (responses, open-ended questions, and reflections) change to enhance relationships?
3. Are there some areas in which your team can improve on their empathy skills? How might you better understand each other?

### **Building Relationships with Difficult People**

1. Think of a time when you have encountered a person you work with who is extremely challenging. What do you find most difficult in relationships with either providers or co-workers?
2. When do you find it most difficult to feel and communicate empathy?
3. Pick two skills that might help you in these difficult situations.
4. How might this look and sound? Try it out with your team or write a play-by-play as you imagine it. Read it to your team for feedback.

### **Personal Reflections on Building Relationships**

This aspect of the discussion guide can be carried out as an alternative group discussion with your team. Ask each person to write a brief response and share with one other person.

1. Most people struggle with judgments about other people. When do you find yourself struggling most with judgments about clients/patients or co-workers?
2. How might a lack of empathy be hindering your ability to communicate positively?
3. Can you see yourself committing to changing one behavior in the next two months or so? Write your commitment down or share it with someone.